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Monumenta Nipponica, Volume 63, Number 2, Autumn 2008, pp. 211-238  
(Article)



Published by Sophia University  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mni.0.0024>

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# Reflections on the Meaning of Our Country

## Kamo no Mabuchi's *Kokuikō*

PETER FLUECKIGER

IN 1765, when Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697–1769) wrote *Kokuikō* 国意考 (Reflections on the Meaning of Our Country), he was already an accomplished scholar of the Japanese classics, having produced commentaries on such texts as the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集, *Kokinshū* 古今集, and *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語 as well as linguistic studies of ancient Japanese. He was also a prominent poet, famous for reviving the composition of poetry in the style of the *Man'yōshū*. From 1746 to 1760 he had served as the assistant in Japanese studies (*wagaku goyō* 和学御用) to Tayasu Munetake 田安宗武 (1715–1771), son of the shogun Yoshimune 吉宗 (1684–1751, r. 1716–1745), and after retiring from this position, he continued to have an active career, teaching at his private academy in Edo and producing a range of scholarly works until his death in 1769. Although his works primarily took the form of commentaries or lexicons, he laid out his ideas in a more systematic form in his prefaces and in a number of stand-alone discursive essays.<sup>1</sup> *Kokuikō* is the most ambitious of these essays, presenting a utopian vision of ancient Japan as a society governed in accordance with nature, which was then corrupted by the introduction of foreign philosophies, especially Confucianism.

Mabuchi's construction of Japanese cultural identity through reference to an idealized past, as well as his framing of this identity in terms of the difference between Japan and China, and between Japan's native values and Confucianism, are approaches commonly associated with Kokugaku 国学. One reading of *Kokuikō* would thus be to see it as a salvo in the contest between Kokugaku and Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan.<sup>2</sup> Such an interpretation, however, raises as

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<sup>1</sup> I do not mean to imply by this a separation between philology and philosophy in Mabuchi's scholarship. For him the two approaches were necessarily intertwined, and we cannot classify a work as "philological" or "philosophical" simply on the basis of such genre categories as the commentary or the essay.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Mogi Makoto 茂木誠 writes, "Kokuikō . . . attempted, through its opposition to Confucianism, to clarify Japan's own distinctive 'Way' from a Kokugaku standpoint" (Mogi 1979,

many questions as it answers. For one, Confucianism encompasses a wide variety of philosophical perspectives. In criticizing “Confucianism,” Mabuchi necessarily also assigned it a particular shape as an object of discourse. To stress Mabuchi’s role as a critic of Confucianism is implicitly to lend credence to his formulation of this issue. But that formulation hardly went uncontested. And one might even argue that Mabuchi himself still worked within an essentially Confucian worldview, given that, among other things, he envisioned ancient Japan as a hierarchical, well-governed society in which such virtues as humaneness (*ren* 仁, Jp. *jin*) and rightness (*yi* 義, Jp. *gi*) existed naturally.<sup>3</sup>

To take *Kokuikō* as representative of Kokugaku ideology is likewise not as simple a proposition as it may appear. The term “Kokugaku” itself has carried a range of meanings, both in Tokugawa writings and modern scholarship, and has been associated with various Tokugawa figures who in some way attempted to recover Japanese literary, linguistic, religious, or political traditions through the study of past texts. Even considering just the figures who today are most commonly recognized as Kokugaku scholars, such as those affiliated with the schools of Mabuchi, Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), and Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843), we can see many differences in their activities and ideas. Recent studies, such as Susan Burns’s *Before the Nation* and Mark McNally’s *Proving the Way*, have emphasized the diversity and conflict within Kokugaku,<sup>4</sup> and in a review article on these two books, Mark Teeuwen calls attention to a key aspect of this diversity: “[W]e need,” he writes, “to lay aside our own orthodoxy about Kokugaku: that Kokugaku is nativism, and that nativism is Kokugaku.” Departing from the common practice of using “nativism” simply as a translation for “Kokugaku,” he instead defines nativism as “the ambition to revive or perpetuate aspects of indigenous culture in response to a perceived threat from other cultures,”<sup>5</sup> and points out that such a stance is neither present within all Kokugaku, nor absent outside it.<sup>6</sup>

p. 216). Later he comments that in *Kokuikō*, “the fundamentally different standpoints of Kokugaku and Confucianism are clearly displayed” (p. 220).

<sup>3</sup> While I do describe certain figures below as “anti-Confucian,” this is only meant to indicate that they express criticism of what they consider to be Confucianism; it is not a judgment of whether they had in fact broken away from Confucian thought, however we might conceive of it.

<sup>4</sup> See Burns 2003 and McNally 2005. Burns examines a number of challenges to Norinaga’s interpretation of the *Kojiki* 古事記 and to the vision of community that his hermeneutics entailed. McNally describes the competition among Kokugaku schools and argues that the formation of a Kokugaku orthodoxy in the nineteenth century involved a suppression of Kokugaku’s contentious history.

<sup>5</sup> Teeuwen 2006, pp. 240, 227.

<sup>6</sup> McNally also distinguishes nativism from Kokugaku, but somewhat differently. He uses “Kokugaku” to “refer specifically to the scholarship of Atsutane and the members of the Norinaga School during the nineteenth century,” as opposed to “nativism,” which he uses “for classical literary studies prior to 1800, and for the various forms of Shinto scholarship of the nineteenth century other than Kokugaku” (McNally 2005, p. 1, n. 1). Although Teeuwen offers a clear definition of “nativism,” he does not explicitly state how he proposes to define the boundaries (temporal, institutional, ideological, or other) of Kokugaku.

The distinction Teeuwen seeks to draw between nativism and Kokugaku is useful for interpreting *Kokuikō*: the ideas Mabuchi expresses in this piece fit within Teeuwen's definition of nativism, but not all of those who are usually counted as Kokugaku scholars agreed with those ideas. Among the most notable critics of *Kokuikō* were, in fact, Mabuchi's Edo-ha 江戸派 (Edo school) disciples, who did not see their poetic activities and classical Japanese literary studies as entailing any conflict with Confucianism. To read *Kokuikō* as a core statement of Kokugaku ideology, then, contributes to a canonization of certain visions of Japanese cultural identity in the Tokugawa period and a dismissal of others as minor, or as aberrations from the mainstream. Not only do we need to recognize that *Kokuikō* represents just one possible variety of Kokugaku, we also should be cautious about taking it as a template for Tokugawa nativism. Certain of Mabuchi's contemporaries expressed a desire to cleanse Japan of foreign influences, while still accepting the validity of Confucianism. They justified such a stance by claiming that Confucianism, despite its historical association with China, was in fact not really "foreign" at all, but was rather a universal value system most perfectly realized through virtues native to Japan. Instead of seeing *Kokuikō* as a definitive statement of either Kokugaku or nativist thought, it will be more productive to take it as offering a window on the multifaceted mid-to late Edo debates over the nature of Japanese tradition, to which it was both heir and an important contributor.

*Kokuikō* is organized as a series of responses to questions from an imaginary interlocutor, and although Mabuchi does not identify the interlocutor by name, many of the questions come more or less directly from *Bendōsho* 弁道書 (1735), a polemical treatise on the nature of the Way by the Confucian scholar Dazai Shundai 太宰春台 (1680–1747). In *Bendōsho*, Shundai maintained that Japan lacked any normative standards for governing society prior to the importation of Confucian teachings, an argument that gave rise to a series of rebuttals from a diverse group of scholars. To show how *Kokuikō* is situated within contested discourses on Confucianism, Japanese identity, and the relationship between the two, I first read Mabuchi's text against the background of earlier responses to *Bendōsho*. All of the critics of Shundai I discuss argued for the innate superiority of Japan over China, but some of them self-identified as allies of Confucianism, while others declared their opposition to it. These responses to *Bendōsho* illustrate the range of definitions of Japan's relationship to Confucianism advanced by intellectuals of the time and allow us to see that Mabuchi drew upon many existing ideas, even as he constructed the Japanese-Confucian dynamic in new ways. I then turn to the reception of *Kokuikō* by Mabuchi's followers, who offered various opinions on the validity of its arguments, as well as its proper place within his oeuvre. These disagreements, I argue, reveal that Mabuchi's vision of Japan did not establish an orthodox ideology, but continued to be reworked and reassessed, even among those who looked to him as their intellectual predecessor.

### *Mabuchi's Kokuikō*

In *Kokuikō*, Mabuchi depicts Japanese culture as in harmony with the workings of the natural order, or Heaven and Earth (*ametsuchi* 天地), and contrasts this characteristic with the Confucian outlook, which he sees as trapped within the limitations inherent in human creations and reasoning. He frequently links Confucian patterns of thinking to *kotowari* 理り, which can be translated as “reasoning” or “principle” and is closely associated in Tokugawa thought with Song Confucian metaphysics, which holds a single “principle” (*li* 理, Jp. *ri*) to permeate all things in the cosmos and connect them in a unified moral order. Mabuchi takes this quality of Confucian thought to reduce the fluidity of natural phenomena to a set of rigid categories. He writes:

Just as in the progression of the seasons, spring gradually becomes mild and summer likewise gradually turns hot, the workings of Heaven and Earth are gradual and smooth. If it were to be as the Chinese say, on the first day of spring it should suddenly become warm and on the first day of summer immediately turn hot.<sup>7</sup>

He also criticizes this kind of reasoning as sapping the world of vitality: “To try to define things unequivocally in terms of principle is to treat them as dead objects. It is the things that occur naturally, in accordance with Heaven and Earth, that are alive and active” (pp. 377–78).

In that the vastness of Heaven and Earth makes it unfathomable by the human intellect, the human tendency to try to understand things through reasoning has alienated people from the spontaneous workings of nature:

In China they place great value on humans as the loftiest of all things (*banbutsu no rei* 万物の靈), but in my opinion humans should be considered the worst of all things. Just as Heaven and Earth, and the sun and the moon, continue on unchanged, birds, beasts, fish, plants, and trees all remain as they were in the past. Humans, however, with their half-baked understanding of things, pursue their own reasoning. As a result, various wicked intentions arise between people, and the world becomes disordered. (p. 379)

That Confucianism has spread in Japan despite these defects Mabuchi attributes to its seductive promise of an easily comprehensible worldview:

The learning of China is from the beginning something created by humans on the basis of their own hearts, so it is fabricated with sharp, square angles and is easy to grasp. The Ancient Way of our Imperial Land is round and smooth in accordance with Heaven and Earth, and it cannot easily be described exhaustively with the meanings and words of humans, so it is difficult for people of later times to understand it. (p. 384)

Mabuchi's arguments show similarities to Daoist critiques of Confucianism, and despite his antipathy toward things Chinese, he acknowledges the general validity of Daoist ideas, writing, “Rather, Laozi's saying that one should simply act

<sup>7</sup> *Kokuikō*, p. 383.

in keeping with Heaven and Earth (*ametsuchi no manimani* 天地のまにまに) surely accords better with the Way of the world" (p. 382).

The difference between the spontaneity of nature and the narrowness of human cultural constructs is central to Mabuchi's discussion of morality. Describing Confucian morality, he writes, "Things end up becoming constrained because humans . . . create particular names such as humaneness (*jin*), rightness (*gi*), ritual (*rei* 礼), and wisdom (*chi* 智). It is better to do without such names and just go along with the heart of Heaven and Earth" (p. 384). Because the ancient Japanese acted in accordance with Heaven and Earth, they were able to achieve a kind of natural morality, even without elaborate moral teachings. The quality that made this possible is that the people of antiquity were "straightforward" (*naoshi* 直し). Mabuchi takes care to explain that straightforwardness is not an absolute moral perfection. Instead, he sees it as defined by a complete transparency, in which people are exactly what they seem to be: "When people are straightforward, occasionally there are those who do bad things or want to seize power, but because these desires arise out of a straightforward heart, they are not concealed. Because they are not concealed, they are quickly stamped out and do not result in any serious disturbance" (p. 386). This transparency was obscured by the introduction of Confucianism, after which "[w]hile on the surface everything became elegant, there came to be many people with wicked hearts" (p. 377).

The pernicious effects of human reasoning are evident, Mabuchi holds, in the idea that rulers should be chosen based on their virtue, a virtue that is defined according to fallible and narrow-minded human judgment. He argues that the idea of choosing rulers according to their virtue might be superficially attractive, but was, in fact, responsible for Confucianism's failure to provide a lasting basis for government in China. Going back to the earliest Chinese sage kings, Mabuchi criticizes Yao 堯 for passing the throne not to his own son, but to Shun 舜, whom Yao selected for his virtue. In effect this treated the throne as something to be contested, rather than determined through a fixed and stable hereditary succession, setting a dangerous precedent. Every subsequent Chinese dynasty, Mabuchi goes on to note, eventually descended into chaos. Surveying the pantheon of Chinese sage rulers, he finds flaws even in such revered figures as the Duke of Zhou 周, whom he depicts as a ruthless seeker of power. He concludes that in China, "the world was disordered in every generation and was never governed well" (p. 376). In contrast to the political disorder of China, Japan "was originally governed well in accordance with the heart of Heaven and Earth (*ametsuchi no kokoro no manimani* 天地の心のまにまに)" (p. 377). After the introduction of Confucianism, though, Japan, too, began to experience various political disturbances. Thus, Mabuchi concludes, Confucianism "has not only brought about disorder in China, but has also done the same in this country" (p. 377).

Addressing the question of what makes people follow a ruler, Mabuchi argues that rulers who lead simple lives inspire reverence and influence the ruled as well

to have few desires, a line of reasoning that again echoes certain Daoist ideas.<sup>8</sup> Rulers who flaunt their wealth and status, on the other hand, give rise to envy among their subjects, which inspires rebellious sentiments. Mabuchi presents an idealized image of the emperors of ancient Japan, writing that “the emperor’s dwelling had a shingled roof and earthen walls, and he went out hunting with a bow and arrow, wearing mulberry fiber and hempen clothes” (p. 385). In China, by contrast, “those in high positions make a display of their power and status” (p. 385). Spreading in Japan with the introduction of Chinese court practices in the Nara period, this tendency precipitated political strife and corrupted the original good government of the emperors.

Despite his praise for ancient imperial rule, Mabuchi’s discussions of government in the Japan of his own day focus not on any form of imperial restoration, but on rule by the warrior class. He is quite blunt about the origins of the Tokugawa ruling class, pointing out that people’s current rank is a function of how successful they were at killing during the period of warfare that preceded the Tokugawa peace. He values warrior rule, though, since “[a]s a means of showing authority, nothing surpasses the Way of the warrior (*mononofu no michi* もののふの道<sup>9</sup>)” (p. 385). This approach to government does not entail the ostentatious display of wealth and status typical of Chinese rulers, but rests on a kind of upright martial valor that inspires both gratitude and fear. The Way of the warrior does not rely on discursive teachings that instruct people in right and wrong, as “[h]owever reasonable people may find this, unless there is some promise of return, such teachings will not penetrate to the depths of their hearts and draw them in” (p. 391). Mabuchi applies his distinction between rationalistic Confucian morality and the Japanese ethic of “straightforwardness” to his discussion of warrior rule as well, arguing, “Being straightforward, the true Way of the warrior (*bu no michi* 武の道) is not lackadaisical or selfish, so it allows one to govern both house and realm effortlessly” (p. 391). Although the warrior government Mabuchi describes in these terms differs from the imperial rule that he idealizes in his discussions of ancient Japan, he attributes similar qualities of honesty and directness to both forms of government. His praise of warrior rule does not mean that he sees the contemporary political situation as ideal, as at the end of *Kokuikō* he discusses the need for reform. His conclusion, however, is that as “[t]he multitudes are governed according to the heart of the ruler” (p. 392), all people can do is hope for the emergence of a good ruler; thereafter, he optimistically predicts, “all the world would become straightforward within the space of ten or twenty years” (p. 393).

The main objects of Mabuchi’s scholarship were ancient Japanese language and literature, and in *Kokuikō* he relates these topics as well to the harmonious

<sup>8</sup> For example, the  *道德經 states, “Not to honor men of worth will keep the people from contention; not to value goods which are hard to come by will keep them from theft; not to display what is desirable will keep them from being unsettled of mind” (Lau 1963, p. 7).*

<sup>9</sup> This is one of a number of similar terms Mabuchi uses, all of which I translate as “the Way of the warrior.”

society of ancient Japan and its corruption by foreign influences. The contrast he draws between the duplicity of Chinese civilization and Japan's original straightforwardness is mirrored, for example, in his portrayal of the differences between Chinese characters and Japanese phonetic writing. Noting that China is the only country to depend on characters, while even India and Holland use phonetic script, he declares that the large number of characters makes the Chinese writing system unnecessarily burdensome. Its adoption in Japan he describes through a narrative of infiltration and corruption: first used only for their phonetic value, and thus serving as a transparent medium to represent the existing Japanese language, Chinese characters eventually changed the language itself from the inside, a process he likens to political usurpation: "the words were the masters and the characters were the servants, so people used characters as they saw fit. Later, though, it was as if the words, which had been the masters, lost their position and were replaced by the characters that had been the servants" (p. 381).<sup>10</sup> Mabuchi relates this process to his earlier discussion of China's political instability, commenting, "Such a development shows the influence of the wicked Chinese custom of lowly people becoming the ruler" (p. 381).

In *Kokuikō* Mabuchi ascribes a number of roles to poetry, all of them related to poetry's ability to go beyond the limits of theoretical reasoning. First of all, he argues, poetry offers a special understanding of society, as "when one understands poetry, one will also naturally understand the causes of peace and disorder" (p. 377). This is actually a role that many Confucian theories assign poetry, as Mabuchi acknowledges. "Indeed it must have been for this reason," he continues, "that even Confucius did not discard the Odes, but made them first among the books" (p. 377). Poetry also provides access to the past: "Through ancient poetry we come to know the ancient meanings (*kokoro* 心) and words (*kotoba* 詞), and through these we can then know the state of the world in ancient times. From knowing the conditions of ancient times, we can go back further and consider matters of the Age of the Gods" (p. 381). He contrasts this method of knowing, which relies on inhabiting linguistic and cultural worlds, with the theoretical knowledge of Confucians (especially followers of Song Confucianism), who try to use their individual powers of reasoning to "construct theories about everything and give things deep meaning" (pp. 381–82), and who "explain [matters of the Age of the Gods] as if they could be determined exhaustively by the

<sup>10</sup> Mabuchi's argument here is similar to a comment Arai Hakuseki 新井白石 (1657–1725) makes in *Tōga* 東雅, where he writes, "The obscuring and disappearance of the meaning of the ancient words of our country appears to be largely due to how Chinese characters were used and the ancient language was discarded. To explain this in more detail, the words from here [Japan] and the characters from there [China] are necessarily in a relationship of master to guest. The words of our country, as transmitted from earliest antiquity, are namely the master, and the words of foreign countries are namely the guest. When Chinese characters came to be commonly used, the meanings of the two were matched up with each other, and they always followed [the Chinese characters]. After that, the guests in the end became the masters, and the masters became the guests" (*Tōga*, p. 121). Kate Wildman Nakai discusses Hakuseki's views on ancient language in Nakai 1988, p. 243, and brings up this passage from *Tōga* on p. 381, n. 17.

human heart" (p. 382). Mabuchi further describes poetry as a means to self-cultivation, especially through its ability to bring about a gentle, magnanimous disposition: "The human heart is selfish, so people quarrel with others and judge things on the basis of reason (*kotowari*), but when they possess the spirit of poetry, they go beyond reasoning and employ gentleness, so the world is governed well and people are at peace" (pp. 391–92). For the same reason, he holds, poetry should not be subjected to moral judgments: "Although poetry may express wicked and immoral desires, this does not cause the heart to become disordered; instead the heart is made gentle" (p. 378).

*Kokuikō* covers a wide range of subject matter, including language, literature, morality, and politics, and Mabuchi does not always explicitly clarify the relationships between these topics. He employs a similar discursive framework, though, to discuss all of these issues, one based on such oppositions as those between nature and human creations, fluid spontaneity and rigid conceptual categories, transparency and duplicity, and simplicity and complexity. He associates the first element of each pair with Japan and the second with China (and Confucianism), generating an image of Japan as an honest, simple, harmonious society that became contaminated by the infiltration of Chinese ways of thinking. Many elements of Mabuchi's image of Japan overlap with the ideas of other eighteenth-century intellectuals, and the following section explores, through an examination of critiques of Shundai's *Bendōsho*, the different ways that writers of the time articulated ideas of Japan's innate virtue and superiority to China, and how *Kokuikō* compares to these other formulations of Japanese identity.

### *Dazai Shundai's Bendōsho and Its Critics*

A disciple of the Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666–1728), Dazai Shundai played a leading role in developing Sorai's political philosophy.<sup>11</sup> Sorai had argued that the Confucian Way was a human creation, the work of the sage kings of ancient China, and that its purpose lay in governing society rather than the cultivation of individual moral perfection. Alarmed at the changes that had come with the ascendancy of the merchant class since the Genroku 元禄 period (1688–1704), Sorai had urged the shogun Yoshimune to enact a series of reforms aimed at returning Japan to what Sorai imagined to be the purely feudal model of government established by the sages. Shundai's writings on political economy, the most significant of which is *Keizairoku* 經濟錄 (1729), echo Sorai's concerns by emphasizing the need to regulate society through proper ritual, music, and political institutions.

Mabuchi took issue with many aspects of Sorai's and Shundai's thought, but the specific text of Shundai's that he criticized most directly was *Bendōsho*. As Ogasawara Haruo 小笠原春夫 has shown, *Bendōsho* became a target of criticism soon after its publication in 1735, with five rebuttals appearing within the following four years alone, and it continued to be the object of periodic attacks for

<sup>11</sup> The literary aspects of Sorai's teachings were largely carried on by another scholar, Hattori Nankaku 服部南郭 (1683–1759).

the remainder of the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> In a study of the various anti-Sorai movements that arose in the eighteenth century, Kojima Yasunori 小島康敬 has divided criticisms of Sorai and his school into four basic categories: criticism of his scholarly tendencies (such as his neglect of moral cultivation), questioning of his claims to philological objectivity, criticism of his Sinocentrism, and criticism of various of his philosophical doctrines (such as his view that norms did not derive from a natural order but were human creations).<sup>13</sup> The responses to *Bendōsho* discussed below belong largely to the third and fourth categories, which are connected in that a view of the Way as a historical human invention suggests some kind of special status for the place where it came into being.<sup>14</sup>

*Bendōsho and the Way of the Sages.* In *Bendōsho*, Shundai describes humans as having lived originally in a state of nature in which they “were not divided into noble and base, or high and low, but were all equal in status.”<sup>15</sup> He sees this lack of status distinctions as a sign of barbarism and says that people at this stage were “human in form, but their hearts were no different from those of beasts” (p. 215). Lacking any government or social norms, people were left to fend for themselves in a brutal world where “the intelligent were able to escape starvation and cold, but the stupid were not, and the strong seized the clothing and food of the weak” (p. 216). What saved the people from this situation was a wise leader, who “taught the stupid people how to obtain clothing and food and instructed the various people who were fighting so as to make them cease their violence” (p. 216). Shundai defines sagehood in terms of the accomplishments of such early leaders, who gained their authority through the willingness of the people to follow those who benevolently provided for them; they “did not become rulers by arrogantly putting themselves above the common people” (p. 216).

The sages brought order to society by teaching not solely practical survival skills, but also moral virtues: “The five relations of ruler and subject, father and child, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and friends are the essence of human ethics. Therefore these are called the five regulations, or the five rules. If even one of these five Ways is lacking among humans, the realm cannot be governed.”<sup>16</sup> Shundai distinguishes his view of the five relationships from that of Song philosophers like Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) by emphasizing that the ritual (*rei*) and rightness (*gi*) with which they are established “are

<sup>12</sup> See Ogasawara 1988, pp. 9–82. On pp. 10–11, Ogasawara provides a useful chart summarizing the responses to *Bendōsho*.

<sup>13</sup> Kojima 1994, pp. 203–19.

<sup>14</sup> One critique of *Bendōsho* that I do not discuss, but that takes a rather different approach, is *Baku Bendōsho 駁弁道書* (1739), by Otsudō Kanchū 乙堂喚丑 (?–1760). A Zen priest of the Sōtō 曹洞 sect, Kanchū was concerned primarily with defending Buddhism against Shundai’s attacks.

<sup>15</sup> *Bendōsho*, p. 215.

<sup>16</sup> *Bendōsho*, p. 217. This emphasis on morality is actually not out of line with Sorai’s philosophy, even though Sorai is often seen as having replaced morality with politics as the content of the Confucian Way. As Hiraishi Naoaki 平石直昭 has discussed, the separation between morality and politics is not so clear-cut in Sorai’s thought, as Sorai sees the promotion of basic morality as itself an important function of government (Hiraishi 1987, pp. 81–98).

teachings of the sages, not something that originally inhered in people's hearts" (p. 218). For Shundai, the establishment of virtues serves in particular to control the natural desires that, if left unchecked, lead to chaos and conflict. He argues that to be governed only by our spontaneous desires is to be like beasts; by providing ethical structures through which to channel our desires, the teachings of the sages raise us above the immediacy of raw desires. Even beasts, he writes, feel affection for their parents while they are nursing, and males and females naturally are attracted to each other for the purpose of mating; nevertheless, to attain the civilized state that distinguishes humans from beasts, people must be taught filial piety and the appropriate marital norms (pp. 216–17).

This picture of the achievements of the sages carried the implication that prior to the introduction of Confucianism, Japan lacked normative guidelines for structuring society. Shundai denies that Shinto could have provided such norms, arguing that what people in his own day called "Shinto" did not exist in ancient Japan; it was formulated in later times by taking various traditions for prayers and offerings and embellishing these philosophically with borrowings from Buddhism and Confucianism.<sup>17</sup> He depicts early Japanese society as characterized by the kind of state of nature discussed above, dwelling particularly on the lack of an incest taboo. "[F]rom the Age of the Gods until the time of the fortieth human emperor," he comments, "even rulers married siblings and other relatives" (p. 224). He also provides a linguistic argument for the nonexistence of the Way in ancient Japan, writing, "Proof that there was originally no Way in Japan can be seen in the fact that there are no native Japanese readings (*wakun* 和訓) for the Chinese characters 'humaneness' (*ren*, Jp. *jin*), 'rightness' (*yi*, Jp. *gi*), 'ritual' (*li*, Jp. *rei*), 'music' (*yue* 楽, Jp. *gaku*), 'filial piety' (*xiao* 孝, Jp. *kō*), and 'brotherly obedience' (*ti*悌, Jp. *tei*)" (pp. 223–24). By pointing out the lack of any preexisting Japanese words (as opposed to Japanese readings derived from Chinese) for these central Confucian terms, Shundai tries to show that it was not just the words that were borrowed from China, but also the concepts they represent.

The primitive and barbaric state of early Japanese society was only improved, Shundai argues, when "the Way of the Chinese sages came to be practiced in this country, and in all things in the realm they learned from China. From that point on people in this country knew ritual and rightness, became aware of the Way of human ethics (*jinrin no michi* 人倫の道), and did not commit the acts of beasts" (p. 224). He gives a prominent position to the role of Prince Shōtoku 聖德 (574–622) in this process, describing his activities as analogous to the acts of cultural creation carried out by the sage kings of ancient China: "He established court offices and regulated dress, promoted ritual and music, governed the coun-

<sup>17</sup> *Bendōsho*, p. 206. Shundai also points out that the term *shintō* 神道 is in fact taken from the Chinese term *shendao* 神道 ("mysterious Way"), as used in the first appendix to the *guan* 觀 hexagram in the *Yi jing* 易經 which states, "Contemplate the mysterious Way of Heaven, and the four seasons are not out of order. The sages established teachings with the mysterious Way, and the realm followed" (Shundai cites this passage in *Bendōsho*, p. 205).

try and led the people, and carried out a civilizing transformation in the realm. The achievements of Umayado 厥戸 [Shōtoku] in our country can be considered acts of creation by a sage" (p. 204).

In *Bendōsho* Shundai also criticizes Buddhism, which he sees as flawed on account of its antisocial orientation. Because Buddhists strive to separate themselves from worldly attachments, he argues, "those who practice this Way do not carry out the tasks of warriors, farmers, artisans, and merchants" (p. 209). Taking aim particularly at Buddhism's emphasis on individual enlightenment, he concludes that Buddhism is "ultimately only a Way for governing a single heart and finding peace for an isolated individual; it is not a Way for governing the realm and country" (pp. 214–15). Further, the definition of Buddhist enlightenment in terms of being free from desires sets a goal that is at odds with human nature and therefore futile. By contrast, the ritual and rightness of the sages are simply meant to keep desires in check and prevent them from being manifested in antisocial behavior, not to eliminate them entirely (pp. 219–20). Shundai's dismissal of both Shinto and Buddhism, then, leaves Confucianism as the only "Way" that can be relied on to provide a normative structure for social relationships.

*Shinto-Confucian Syncretist Critiques of Bendōsho.* *Bendōsho* evoked critiques from various quarters. One set of opponents were people who held that Shinto and Confucianism were both manifestations of a single universal Way. Such figures asserted the legitimacy and autonomy of Shinto as a native Japanese Way, while at the same time taking it to be equivalent to, or at least in harmony with, Confucianism. This perspective drew from an important theme in Tokugawa Confucian thought. As Kate Wildman Nakai has discussed, the rise of Confucianism in seventeenth-century Japan presented Tokugawa intellectuals with the apparent contradiction of trying to define norms for Japanese society by using a philosophy that was not only Chinese in origin, but also deeply tied to a Sinocentric worldview. As a consequence, she argues, they were "animated by a strong impulse to detach Confucianism from its Chinese context and to establish that the truth inherent in the way of the sages was as relevant to the Japanese geographical and cultural setting as to the Chinese."<sup>18</sup> One means of doing so, open particularly to followers of Zhu Xi, was to assert that the Confucian Way as a manifestation of natural principle had been expressed more perfectly in Japan than in China. Such an argument often entailed an equation of Shinto and the Confucian Way.

Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1573–1657), for example, equating the three imperial regalia of the mirror, jewel, and sword with the Confucian virtues of wisdom (*zhi*, Jp. *chi*), humaneness (*ren*, Jp. *jin*), and courage (*yong* 勇, Jp. *yū*) respectively, concluded that "the kingly Way and Shinto have the same principle."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Nakai 1980, p. 162.

<sup>19</sup> *Shintō denju*, pp. 12–13.

Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇斎 (1618–1682) similarly wrote, “The cosmos has only a single principle, so even though there is the difference between the land where the sun rises [Japan] and the land where the sun sets [China] as to whether sages or gods (*kami* 神) are born there, still those Ways naturally are in mysterious agreement (*myōkei* 妙契).”<sup>20</sup> Watarai Nobuyoshi 度会延佳 (1615–1690), a member of the family that served as hereditary priests of the Ise outer shrine and one of Ansai’s teachers, emphasized the distinction between the universality of the Way and the particularity of its cultural manifestations. “Shinto and Confucianism,” he noted, “have a single principle (*mune* 旨), so there ought not to be differences in the teachings that are practiced according to these Ways, but there are differences in the institutions (*seido* 制度) and culture (*bun’i* 文為) of other countries and our country.”<sup>21</sup>

Among the figures who, inheriting this stance, criticized Shundai from a Shinto-Confucian syncretic perspective was Sasaki Takanari 佐々木高成 (dates unknown), the author of *Ben Bendōsho* 弁弁道書 (1737). Takanari, who produced a number of works on Shinto, explains his own intellectual background as follows:

When I was young, I entered the school of Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁斎 [1627–1705] in Kyoto and studied what is called ‘Ancient Learning’ (*kogaku* 古学). After two or three years, I realized that it contained deviant teachings, and in the end I mended my ways and studied under Yamazaki Ansai’s senior student Satō Naokata 佐藤直方 [1650–1719]; there I was first able to know the correct Way of the Cheng 程 brothers and Zhu.<sup>22</sup> Later, I also heard Ansai’s Shinto teachings from Ōgimachi Kinmichi 正親町公通 [1653–1733], junior first rank.<sup>23</sup>

Takanari’s adherence to Ansai’s teachings is reflected in his defense of Song Confucianism and in the parallels he draws between Confucianism and Shinto. “There is only a single Way,” he writes, “and this Way fills Heaven and Earth. . . . Those who clarified it are the ancient gods and humans of our country” (p. 1:5).

<sup>20</sup> From the preface to Ansai’s *Kōhan zensho* 洪範全書. Quoted in Park 2002, p. 147. Such a premise was admittedly not without its paradoxical elements. The oath taken by those who sought to study Shinto with Ansai included the promise, “I will not combine the Ways of other countries [with Shinto] or make forced analogies (*fukai* 附会) [between them]” (quoted in Park 2002, p. 159). At the same time, Ansai is famous for what most people would consider extremely forced interpretations of works such as the *Nihongi* 日本紀 in which he derived Confucian concepts from the text through inventive etymologies and other means. Herman Ooms notes, “Ansai . . . singled out certain meanings as truthful and rejected others as arbitrary. We (but not Ansai) would say that he acted arbitrarily both when he assigned and denied meaning” (Ooms 1985, p. 244). As Ooms suggests, in Ansai’s own view there was a distinction between “forced analogies” and “mysterious agreement” as different ways of relating Shinto to Confucianism. Park Hong-kyu 朴鴻圭 argues that for Ansai, “forced analogies” represented a logic of power, which subordinates different teachings to its own authority, whereas “mysterious agreement” represented a relativization of power through reference to an autonomously existing ideal principle (Park 2002, pp. 158–61).

<sup>21</sup> *Yōfukuki*, p. 87.

<sup>22</sup> The Cheng brothers are Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085) and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107), Confucian philosophers who made an important contribution to the formulation of Song Neo-Confucianism prior to Zhu Xi.

<sup>23</sup> Sasaki 1737, pp. 1:13–14. Each of the two parts of this essay is paginated separately.

Japan's superiority comes from its perfect manifestation of the order of the cosmos, as it "is the country of centrality (*chū* 中) and harmony (*wa* 和) in yin and yang" (p. 2:6), whereas "foreign countries have imbalanced yin and yang" (p. 2:6). Because of this, "In our country, from the beginning of creation, the Way of human ethics was naturally (*shizen to* 自然と) clarified" (p. 1:14), and "without laws or regulations, spontaneously (*onozukara* 自ら) the realm and state were peacefully governed" (p. 2:7). Takanari argues that it was people in foreign countries, not, as Shundai claims, in Japan, who lived like beasts in ancient times. In Japan, the relationship between ruler and subject was stable and unchanging, but "in other countries, those who have intelligence, courage, and talent, even if they are lowly and poor, kill the ruler, seize the country, and make themselves king" (p. 1:11). Infiltration by foreign values was responsible for the violence and chaos seen in later eras of Japanese history: "When the Ways of foreign countries entered our country, we gradually lost the ancient customs of the Age of the Gods, and from the time of the thirtieth to fortieth human emperors, people's customs became like those of other countries, those of broad learning turned crafty (*chikō* 智巧), and they lost the artless (*junboku* 淳朴) Way of ancient times" (pp. 2:6–7).

Takanari in effect distinguishes between Confucianism as a formulation of universal values rooted in the natural order and Confucianism as a historical creation of the sages. He approves of the first of these and sees it as the source of Confucianism's agreement with Shinto. "The Way of the five relationships in everyday life, as it is practiced today," he writes, "is entirely a teaching bestowed by the Sun Goddess. Confucianism is ultimately the same as Shinto" (p. 2:13). Challenging Shundai's assertion that there were no native Japanese terms for the Confucian virtues, Takanari argues that this is not the case, that, for instance, the character *ren* (humaneness) was equivalent to the Japanese word *itsukushima* and *yi* (rightness) to the Japanese reading *yoroshi* (p. 2:9). On the other hand, he also questions Shundai's acclamation of the sage kings, holding that even if they did, as Shundai claims, instruct the people and bring them out of barbarism, these achievements should not be taken as the creation of a Way. Rather, the fact that such teachings were needed in the first place was evidence of China's inferiority (p. 1:7). Shundai, he charges, "has the viewpoint of frog-in-the-well Ancient Learning and thus cannot see the virtue of the Cheng brothers and Zhu, which is like the vast sea" (p. 1:5).

Watarai Tsuneakira 度会常彰 (1675–1752), a priest at the Ise outer shrine who wrote several works on Shinto, produced another syncretic critique of *Bendōsho* the same year that Takanari wrote *Ben Bendōsho*. In his *Shintō meiben* 神道明弁 (1737), Tsuneakira, like Takanari, links Shinto and Confucianism, although, as we might expect, given his family background, he emphasizes Shinto's primacy in this relationship.<sup>24</sup> As had Nobuyoshi before him, Tsuneakira calls attention to the distinction between the universal and the particular. "Although the Way

<sup>24</sup> *Shintō meiben* is discussed in Ogasawara 1988, pp. 44–53; and Teeuwen 1996, pp. 343–46.

that people rely on should be the same in all places,” he writes in *Shintō meiben*, “due to the correctness and deviance of yin and yang, the relative pliancy of material force (*ki* 気, Ch. *qi*), and differences in climate, places have the things that are appropriate to them.”<sup>25</sup> This does not amount to a simple cultural relativism, as he claims that Japan “has received centrality and correctness [in yin and yang]” (p. 2) and “is preeminent and superior to all countries” (p. 12). Countering Shundai’s claim that it is only through teachings that morality is established, Tsunekira argues that moral virtues are innate to human nature, as is evident from the fact that even rustic, uneducated people practice filial piety, brotherly obedience, loyalty, and faithfulness (pp. 8–9). Even though he sees Shinto as providing Japan with its own basis for ethics and good government, independent of Confucian teachings, Tsunekira does, again like Nobuyoshi, allow that the products of Confucian culture, including its rich textual tradition, can be put in the service of Shinto. “We cannot know if there were writings in ancient times,” he explains, “but ever since Wani 王仁 [brought Confucian texts to Japan from Paekche], we have used books from over there, and these were the only classical texts of the divine country. The Way is transmitted through writings, and Confucianism clarifies those writings. Therefore Confucianism is simply an assistant to our Shinto” (p. 13). Because of this, if one first gains a foundation in Shinto and then goes on to study Confucianism, “the two Ways are practiced together, and do not contradict each other” (p. 13). Although Tsunekira thus asserts the autonomy of Shinto and deplores how their study of Confucianism has led people like Shundai to look down on Shinto and Japan, he allots Confucianism a not insignificant role.

*Anti-Confucian Critiques of Bendōsho*. A second kind of attack on Shundai originated from figures who, in common with the writers discussed above, argued for the innate superiority of Japan, but unlike them defined this superiority in opposition to Confucianism. Central to this approach was a shift in the definition of the Confucian Way. While the critics of Shundai discussed earlier relied on Song Confucian ideas of the Way as natural principle, the second group of people accepted Shundai’s view of Confucianism as a historical creation of human sages, but held this to be evidence of Confucianism’s flawed character, rather than the source of its authority.

Matsushita Kensui 松下謙水 (dates unknown) presents a relatively mild form of this type of criticism of Shundai in *Ben Dazai-shi Bendōsho* 弁太宰氏弁道書 (1737).<sup>26</sup> Having asserted the existence of a native Japanese Way prior to the introduction of Confucianism, Kensui does allow Confucianism a positive role in certain contexts, writing, “The Way of Yao and Shun is a Way for governing the realm and country. What Confucius taught is also this Way.”<sup>27</sup> He sees the Confucianism of his own day as something quite different, though:

<sup>25</sup> *Shintō meiben*, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> No biographical information is available on Kensui, and this is his only known work.

<sup>27</sup> *Ben Dazai-shi Bendōsho*, p. 2v.

What Confucians today call the Way discards the writings of the sages. . . . It is of no use in governing the country, and while it seems to be in conflict with Buddhism, in reality its content is entirely the same. This error began when Mencius, in his attempt to remedy the confusion brought about by the Ways of Yang Zhu 楊朱 and Mo Di 墨翟, first put forth new arguments and spoke of things that were not in the teachings of Confucius. . . . The errors of later scholars are severe. These mistakes became widespread in the Tang and Song and reached their height in the Ming. (pp. 12r–12v)

This account of the original purpose and eventual decline of Confucianism is very similar to Sorai's view (inherited by Shundai). Kensui, however, goes on to depart from a fundamental assumption of the Sorai school by denying the contemporary relevance to Japan of even the original form of Confucianism and arguing that "one should not use the Zhou dynasty to discuss the Japan of today" (p. 8r). In this way, he suggests that the most problematic versions of Confucianism are deviations from the true Confucian Way. Rather than something inherently harmful, Confucianism is simply unnecessary for Japan.

A much harsher attack on Confucianism appears in *Ben Bendōsho* 弁弁道書 (1736), by Toba Yoshiaki 烏羽義著 (dates unknown). Little is known about Yoshiaki, but in a short manuscript from 1736 entitled *Ben Bendōsho no ron* 弁弁道書之論, the Shinto scholar Tomobe Yasutaka 伴部安崇 (1667–1740) describes him as a medical doctor (a common profession for scholars at the time) and states that he wrote *Ben Bendōsho* in consultation with a Shintoist named Saitō Awamori 斎藤阿波守 (dates unknown).<sup>28</sup> Yoshiaki first of all challenges Shundai's idea that social norms are a human invention, writing that "the Way emerged naturally (*shizen ni* 自然に)," as is apparent from the innate structuring of the cosmos in hierarchical pairs, such as yang and yin, the firm and the pliant, and the strong and the weak.<sup>29</sup> He continues, "Humans are also like this. When they are numerous, there are always lofty and lowly, parent and child, husband and wife, and elder brother and younger brother. These are differentiated naturally (*onozukara* 自づから)" (pp. 2v–3r). For Yoshiaki, the maintenance of these natural hierarchies is the key to upholding the Way, and he sees Japan as superior to China in this regard, evident particularly in Japan's preservation of the proper relationship between ruler and subject: "Ever since high and low were separated in ancient times, the high have modeled themselves on Heaven and the low have modeled themselves on earth. Even if there was an immoral and violent ruler, the subjects would not usurp his position, just as earth does not change places

<sup>28</sup> *Ben Bendōsho no ron*. Yasutaka's major concern in this piece is to compare Yoshiaki's *Ben Bendōsho* to Matsuoka Obuchi's 松岡雄淵 (1701–1783) *Shintō gakusoku Yamato damashii* 神道學則日本魂 (1733), the text that led to Obuchi's expulsion from Tamaki Masahide's 玉木正英 (1670–1736) school (Obuchi's text is included in NST 39). This episode is discussed in Isomae and Ogura 2005, p. 66. Yasutaka, Obuchi, and Masahide were all followers of various offshoots of Ansai's Suika 垂加Shinto. The internal politics and intellectual debates of Suika Shinto in this period are important topics that, despite their relevance to the topic at hand, are too complex to explore fully here.

<sup>29</sup> Toba 1736, p. 2v.

with Heaven" (p. 18r). In China, on the other hand, "even though from ancient times there have been high and low, the proper relationship of ruler and subject has not been achieved, and dynasty after dynasty there have been violations and usurpations" (p. 18v).

Although Yoshiaki's claim for Japan's superiority over China is based on the idea that China has contravened the natural order, he also suggests that China's decline was unavoidable, given the differences between the two countries' "material force" (*ki*) and "inborn nature" (*sei* 性): Japan's eternal imperial line is an expression of the simple uprightness of Japan's yang nature, while China's unstable politics are a product of its yin nature, which Yoshiaki characterizes as not only weak and passive, but also crafty and scheming (pp. 17v–18v).

Yoshiaki does not deny the existence of conflict and violence in Japanese history, but he attributes such problems to the pernicious influence of foreign value systems. In ancient Japan, he writes, "people were honest (*sunao* 忠) and the country was prosperous, but following the introduction and spread of Confucianism and Buddhism, craftiness and conspiracy flourished, and rebellious subjects and unfilial children arose" (p. 4r). Whereas Shundai claims that the sages raised humans up from the level of animals, Yoshiaki argues that the teachings of the sages have had the exact opposite effect; the hierarchies the sages established were no more than something like the temporary dominance relationships seen among packs of dogs, determined solely by which animals are strong or weak at any particular moment (pp. 16v–17r). Regarding heredity as the only stable way to determine rulers, Yoshiaki criticizes the early successions described in the Chinese historical classic *Shu jing* 書經, where Yao passed on the throne to Shun, rather than to his own less worthy son, and Shun likewise yielded the throne to Yu 禹. The notion that virtue and merit are necessary qualifications for rulership lies at the core of the Confucian idea of the "mandate of Heaven" (*tianming* 天命, Jp. *tenmei*), which holds rulers to derive their authority from a mandate granted by Heaven that can be revoked if they fail to govern properly. For Yoshiaki, though, "'sage' is just another word for one who murders rulers, and 'mandate of Heaven' is the Chinese word for 'rebellion'" (p. 14v).

This critique of terms such as "sage" is part of a larger argument about the falsity of abstract Confucian language. As Yoshiaki puts it, "when Confucians speak of the Way, they only look at empty names and do not know the true substance of the Way" (p. 2r). In response to Shundai's assertion that the lack of Japanese words for such virtues as humaneness and rightness proves that no Way existed in ancient Japan, Yoshiaki writes, "In ancient times in our country, people did not emphasize these terms, but the things they indicate were completely practiced. Therefore humaneness, rightness, ritual, and loyalty are ancient customs of Japan" (p. 12r). In China, on the other hand, "humaneness, rightness, ritual, and loyalty died out, and so they had no choice but to establish these terms" (p. 12v). Here Yoshiaki stands Shundai's argument on its head by claiming that the lack of names for virtues in ancient Japan is actually evidence that these virtues were so completely natural that people did not even think to identify them.

The explicit identification of virtues by the Chinese, on the other hand, shows that these virtues were lacking and needed to be taught.<sup>30</sup> This line of reasoning can be contrasted with Takanari's argument, discussed earlier, which simply tried to establish that the ancient Japanese language in fact had its own names for Confucian virtues.

A later text that attacked *Bendōsho* using arguments similar to Yoshiaki's was *Seidōron* 正道論 (1764), by a shrine priest in Kazusa province named Fukagawa Michinaga 深河猶栄 (1695–1768). Written just a year before *Kokuikō*, *Seidōron* was part of a resurgence of interest in *Bendōsho*, which after the flurry of comment in the mid-1730s had not received much attention in the 1740s and 1750s. Michinaga presents a familiar list of reasons for Japan's superiority, claiming that only Japan has had a stable lineage of rulers, while in China "the Way of ruler and subject depends on force and there is no fixed status."<sup>31</sup> This instability began, he explains, when Yao passed on the throne to Shun: "Yao yielded the realm to a commoner, and with this the foundation was laid for it to be difficult to maintain a lineage of rulers" (p. 392). Michinaga complains that "it shows great confusion when those rotted Confucians conclude that our Imperial Land has no Way just because there are no Japanese readings for such Chinese characters as 'humaneness,' 'rightness,' 'ritual,' 'music,' 'filial piety,' and 'brotherly obedience.'" In Japan, he explains, all such virtues flow spontaneously from the initial establishment of the proper relationship between ruler and subject and the maintenance of the principle of hereditary succession (p. 385).

### *Situating Kokuikō*

The responses to *Bendōsho* discussed above present many characterizations of Japan and China that later appear in *Kokuikō*. They contrast the single line of Japanese emperors with the constantly changing dynasties of China and criticize attempts to determine rulers through human judgment, often pointing to the succession from Yao to Shun as having established a damaging precedent. Many of Shundai's critics portray ancient Japanese as honest, simple, and straightforward, in contrast with the craftiness of the Chinese, and charge the importation of Confucianism with corrupting the originally upright Japanese character. In asserting that Japan had its own indigenous Way prior to the adoption of Confucianism, they define this Way in terms not only of the proper relationship between ruler and subject, but also the maintenance of other Confucian virtues. They deny, though, that these virtues can be attained only through the inculcation of Confucian teachings and take issue with Shundai's assertion that the lack of Japanese words for these virtues indicates the absence of the virtues themselves. Mabuchi, too, cites this passage from *Bendōsho* and counters, "This is

<sup>30</sup> This line of reasoning is familiar from Daoist critiques of Confucianism, such as the following statement in the *Dao de jing*: "When the great way falls into disuse / There are benevolence and rectitude" (Lau 1963, p. 22).

<sup>31</sup> *Seidōron*, p. 389.

an immature argument. In China they established these five virtues and declared that anything that diverged from these was wicked. These five virtues exist naturally in the world, though, just like the four seasons" (p. 383).

The earlier attacks on Shundai all assert Japan's superiority and see it as rooted in Japan's possession of a "Way," but they use two different basic paradigms to define the relationship of this Way to Confucianism. The first takes Confucianism as one expression of the same universal Way that is the source of Japan's superiority, meaning that there is no contradiction between following Confucianism and upholding Japan's native value system. Although China is inferior, this has nothing to do with flaws in Confucianism *per se*, but is rather a result of China's failure to uphold Confucian values as fully as has Japan. The second paradigm, on the other hand, depicts Confucianism as something separate from the Way of Japan and as a corrupting influence on this Way. It ascribes to Japan virtues that are also promoted by Confucians, but it does not define these virtues as "Confucian." Instead, proponents of the second paradigm argue that what is "Confucian" is the effort to explicitly conceptualize and teach these virtues, which in China, unlike in Japan, could not be realized naturally. While such teachings might have been of some benefit to ancient China, this was only because it was already a degraded country. When introduced to Japan, their effect was to corrupt its spontaneously achieved morality and good government.

While Mabuchi fits essentially within the second of these paradigms, his critique of Confucianism incorporates new nuances. As we saw, Shundai's critics built on the eighteenth-century debate over whether the Confucian Way is natural (the position taken by followers of Zhu Xi) or invented (the stance associated with the Sorai school). Holding the Confucian Way to be rooted in the natural order, the proponents of Shinto-Confucian syncretism among Shundai's critics basically maintained the former position, while anti-Confucian attacks on *Bendōsho* used the Sorai school argument to dismiss the Confucian Way as a mere human creation of the rulers of ancient China. At times Shundai's critics refer to both formulations of the Confucian Way, presenting one as a distorted or imperfect account of Confucianism. Sasaki Takanari, for example, depicts the sage kings' specific teachings as having value only as an antidote to the innate shortcomings of Chinese society, while Matsushita Kensui charges Song Confucians and other later scholars with having invented a new philosophy and abandoned the original teachings of the sage kings.

Bringing within his purview both theories of the Confucian Way, Mabuchi incorporates these into an image of Confucianism as something that, problematically, combines both elements. The notion of the Confucian Way as natural principle and as invention are alike, he holds, manifestations of an impulse to apply human reasoning and human conceptual categories to all things. A skepticism toward the overextension of human reason had featured prominently in the philosophies of certain earlier Tokugawa Confucians who were critical of Zhu Xi, such as Jinsai and Sorai, both of whom charged Zhu Xi's "principle" with reducing the complexity and vitality of the natural world, as well as human

beings, to a set of rigid, predetermined conceptual categories. Whereas Zhu Xi had seen the principle inherent in the original nature of humans as making possible perfect knowledge of all phenomena in the cosmos, Jinsai and Sorai took Zhu Xi's metaphysical postulations to be a distortion of true Confucianism. They presented the Confucian Way in terms that made more modest (but, they believed, more realistic and meaningful) claims. In their account, the Way provided social norms responsive to the natural world and the inborn qualities of humans, but did not purport to grasp these in a totalizing manner. In denying the validity of Zhu Xi's "principle" as the basis for knowledge of the Way, Mabuchi takes a position similar to that of Jinsai and Sorai, but unlike them, he views Zhu Xi's philosophy as merely a deepening of tendencies present in earlier forms of Confucianism as well, making "the already extremely narrow Confucian Way even narrower" (p. 382). He depicts Confucianism's flaws not just in terms of specific philosophical positions, then, but as deriving from a more general mindset that he claims underlies all Confucian thought. Mabuchi's alternative formulation of the Way shares with Zhu Xi the belief in a natural order as the source of norms for human society and self-cultivation, but, as discussed above, he maintains that following these norms requires an epistemological stance different from the reasoning of Confucians, one that abandons the limitations of all humanly constructed categories.

Accompanying this new critique of Confucianism was a further development of the image of ancient Japan as a naturally harmonious society. Mabuchi, like Shundai's other critics, asserts that moral virtues existed in Japan prior to the introduction of Confucian teachings, but he differs from these earlier critics in characterizing Japan's innate superiority in terms not of a simple moral perfection, but the perfect transparency that he associates with the notion of being "straightforward" (*naoshi*). As we saw earlier, he acknowledges that ancient Japan was not a perfectly peaceful society, but argues that because nothing remained concealed, minor disruptions never developed into larger threats to social stability. He defines the ideal society, then, as one in which people exist in a state of complete openness to each other, a condition that he claims had been disrupted by the importation of various foreign cultural practices that encouraged duplicity and obfuscation.

Mabuchi's description of "straightforwardness" overlaps with the praise of the simplicity and uprightness of ancient Japan voiced by some earlier critics of Shundai. Mabuchi's specific emphasis on transparency is significant, though, for its connection to his valorization of ancient Japanese language and poetry, which he sees as vehicles for communicating the unadorned truth of the human heart. An outgrowth of his earlier literary activities and textual studies, this focus on language and literature is another important aspect that distinguishes Mabuchi's perspective from that of earlier critics of Shundai. While the exact relationship between poetry and the Ancient Way would become a point of contention among Mabuchi's followers, his promotion of a vision of Japanese cultural identity rooted in conceptions of purely native forms of linguistic and literary expression

would have a significant impact on the Tokugawa intellectual world, as would his linking of the composition of poetry, which was one of the primary social activities of his academy, to the recovery of this Japanese identity.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Reception of Kokuikō*

*Kokuikō* is today probably the most widely known of Mabuchi's works and is a standard in modern anthologies of Tokugawa philosophical texts.<sup>33</sup> It was not published in a woodblock edition until 1806, though, suggesting that Mabuchi's contemporaries did not immediately assign it a central place in his oeuvre. Publication is by no means the only index of a piece's significance in the Tokugawa period, as many texts (including *Kokuikō*) were actively circulated and debated in manuscript form. Still, it is striking that *Kokuikō* went unpublished for so long, given that a large number of Mabuchi's other writings were published earlier, many of them multivolume works that involved substantial editing and were presumably more expensive to produce than *Kokuikō*. Moreover, *Kokuikō*'s exposition of a native Japanese Way marked it as something of a departure from the pieces published earlier, which largely concerned literary texts, and the published version of *Kokuikō* included an introductory essay by a student of Norinaga, whose school up to then had been largely uninvolved in publishing Mabuchi's works. The relatively late publication of *Kokuikō*, then, was not the result of a lack of interest in, or resources for, the publication of Mabuchi's works; it needs to be examined for what it reveals about how his scholarship was being assessed in new ways by new people.

Those who played the major role in the initial publication of Mabuchi's works were members of the Edo-ha, the first leaders of which were Katō Enao 加藤枝直 (1692–1785) and Murata Harumichi 村田春道 (1704–1769), both of whom had been instrumental in introducing Mabuchi to Edo literary and cultural circles early in his career. Enao wrote the epilogue to *Kanjikō* 冠辭考 (published 1757), Mabuchi's study of *makurakotoba* 枕詞, and Harumichi was one of the editors. Other of Mabuchi's prominent Edo disciples, including Katori Nahiko 桂取魚彦 (1723–1782), Katō Umaki 加藤美樹 (1721–1777), and Harumichi's son Murata Harusato 村田春郷 (1739–1768), helped edit the first volumes of *Man'yōkō* 万葉考 (published 1769), a commentary of Mabuchi's on the *Man'yōshū*. Later, Enao's son Katō Chikage 加藤千蔭 (1735–1808) and Harumichi's son Murata Harumi 村田春海 (1746–1811), who succeeded their fathers as leaders of the Edo-ha, edited a collection of Mabuchi's poetry entitled *Kamo-ō kashū* 賀茂翁歌集, published in the eleventh month of 1806, the same year and month that *Kokuikō* came out.

Another figure who promoted publication of Mabuchi's works was Ueda Akinari 上田秋成 (1734–1809), who had studied with Katō Umaki and collabo-

<sup>32</sup> Mabuchi's initial foray into poetic theory came in the *Kokka hachiron* 国歌八論 debate of 1742–1746. For a discussion of this debate, see Nosco 1981; Nosco 1990, pp. 109–17; and Boot 1999. Mabuchi's later poetic theories are discussed in Nosco 1990, pp. 128–34.

<sup>33</sup> *Kokusho sōmokuroku* 国書総目録 lists *Kokuikō* as being included in fourteen anthologies apart from editions of Mabuchi's collected works.

rated with him on a number of publications (Umaki had left Edo by this point, so his activities with Akinari can be considered distinct from his earlier work with members of the Edo-ha). Akinari edited *Kokin wakashū uchigiki* 古今和歌集打聽 (published 1789), a record of Mabuchi's lectures on the *Kokinshū*, as well as *Ise monogatari koi* 伊勢物語古意, a commentary on *Ise monogatari*, which was published in 1793 accompanied by Akinari's own commentary on *Ise*, entitled *Yoshiya ashiya* よしやあしゃ. Akinari arranged for the publication in 1790 of two collections of Mabuchi's poetry, *Agatai no kashū* 県居歌集 (edited by Umaki) and *Agatai no shūi* 県居拾遺 (edited by Akinari).

A third figure responsible for getting Mabuchi's works published was his student Arakida Hisaoyu 荒木田久老 (1746–1804), a priest (*oshi* 御師) at the Ise shrines, who financed and wrote prefaces or epilogues for *Ka'ikō* 歌意考 and *Niimanabi* にひまなび, both treatises on poetry and both published in 1800, *Noritokō* 祝詞考, a work on ancient Shinto liturgies also published in 1800, and *Bun'ikō* 文意考, a treatise on prose published in 1802. Although Norinaga is today the most famous of Mabuchi's students, his involvement in the publication of Mabuchi's works was limited to a preface he wrote for *Goikō* 語意考, a treatise on linguistics published in 1789.

As the range of figures active in promoting Mabuchi's works indicates, in the late eighteenth century, Norinaga was only one of a number of influential disciples of Mabuchi. Moreover, his relations with Mabuchi's other followers were often contentious. In the 1780s he engaged in a famous debate with Akinari over such issues as the literal truth of the *Kojiki* 古事記 and the history of the Japanese language; Norinaga eventually edited this debate into a text called *Kakaika* 呵刈葭 (1790). In the late 1790s Norinaga enlisted Hisaoyu to help promote his theory on the relationship between the inner and outer shrines at Ise, but Hisaoyu's role in this affair ended up damaging his relations with priests at both shrines, leaving him resentful toward Norinaga.<sup>34</sup> Shortly thereafter, in 1800, Norinaga's adopted son, Motoori Ōhira 本居大平 (1756–1833), undertook a debate with Murata Harumi, who questioned Norinaga's adherence to the true teachings of Mabuchi.<sup>35</sup> Following Norinaga's death in 1801, conflict continued between the Edo-ha and his students, at least those of his students who saw the primary goal of studying the Japanese classics as lying in the elucidation of a native Japanese Way.

Norinaga's scholarship had encompassed both literary studies and the Ancient Way, and in his pedagogical essay *Uiyamabumi* 宇比山踏 (1798), he warns against neglecting one of these at the expense of the other. On the one hand, he comments disapprovingly that “some people compose poetry and prose and have a fondness for the past, but are simply caught up in surface elegance, while neglecting the Way and paying no attention to it.”<sup>36</sup> At the same time, he criticizes those who “concentrate on studying the Way,” but “dismiss the composition of

<sup>34</sup> Teeuwen 1997, pp. 315–24.

<sup>35</sup> McNally 2005, pp. 69–70.

<sup>36</sup> *Uiyamabumi*, p. 539. For a translation of *Uiyamabumi*, see also Nishimura 1987.

poetry, considering it a mere frivolity" (p. 539). His students, though, were often more specialized in their pursuits, and there was a considerable diversity of interests and ideology among his followers.

Prominent students of Norinaga who occupied themselves primarily with literary studies include Kido Chitate 城戸千楯 (1778–1845), who lived in Kyoto and focused on waka, and Fujii Takanao 藤井高尚 (1764–1840), who lived in Osaka and emphasized classical prose. Not surprisingly, they maintained good relations with Mabuchi's Edo-ha followers, who saw the essence of Mabuchi's teachings as lying in poetry and other literary activities.<sup>37</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, Izumi Makuni 和泉真国 (?–1805), a Norinaga student who lived in Edo, was more interested in the explication of the Ancient Way. Hirata Atsutane, who enrolled in the school of Norinaga's son Motoori Harunawa 本居春庭 (1763–1828) in 1805, was another Edo figure who concentrated largely on the Way. Their relations with the Edo-ha were more tense. Between Norinaga's death in 1801 and the publication of *Kokuikō* in 1806, both Atsutane and Makuni produced works that offered interpretations of Japan's native Way and its relationship to Confucianism together with assessments of Mabuchi's and Norinaga's earlier approaches to these issues. These works show that there was an active interest at this time in the question of a Japanese Way, especially among followers of Norinaga. The publication of *Kokuikō* was another product of this interest, as is clear from both its timing and the fact that *Kokuikō* was published together with a set of commentaries that, much like the works by Atsutane and Makuni, build upon and reevaluate Mabuchi's theory of the Way.

#### *Discourse on the Japanese Way after Mabuchi*

Norinaga's main statement on Japan's native Way, and the work of his that comes closest to *Kokuikō* in subject matter and approach, is *Naobi no mitama* 直毘靈 (1771). *Naobi no mitama* was, with minor revisions, eventually included in 1790 as part of the introduction to the first published volumes of *Kojikiden* 古事記伝, the massive commentary on the *Kojiki* that Norinaga worked on for over three decades, finally completing it in 1798. In *Naobi no mitama*, Norinaga makes many of the same arguments as had Mabuchi about the superiority of the government of the Japanese emperors, the corruption of Japan's original goodness by foreign belief systems, and the duplicity of the so-called sages of China. A significant difference, though, is the shift in *Naobi no mitama* from the impersonal workings of Heaven and Earth that Mabuchi describes to a focus on the gods as willful agents that act upon the human world.

As Norinaga puts it, "All things in the world, such as the changing of the seasons, the falling of the rain, and the gusting of the wind, as well as the various good and bad things that happen to countries and people, all are entirely the august works of the gods."<sup>38</sup> He extends this idea to the origin of the Way itself,

<sup>37</sup> The relationships of Chitate and Takanao to the Edo-ha are mentioned in McNally 2005, pp. 56–57 and 60–61.

<sup>38</sup> *Naobi no mitama*, p. 55. For a translation of *Naobi no mitama*, see Nishimura 1991. There is also an earlier German translation, Stolte 1939.

relying on the notion of divine creation to get around the division between views of the Way as natural and as humanly created:

When we inquire about what kind of a Way this Way is, it is not the natural Way of Heaven and Earth. Understand this well, and do not mistakenly think it to be the same as the ideas of those such as Laozi and Zhuangzi 莊子 in China. Nor is it a Way created by humans. Rather, this Way was created by the august spirit of the awesome god Takamimusubi 高御產巢日. (p. 57)

Norinaga similarly describes the gods as the source of an original goodness in humans, writing, “All humans, due to the august spirits of the Musubi 產巢日 gods, from birth naturally know the actions that they ought to perform and perform these” (p. 59).

In 1803, soon after Norinaga’s death, Atsutane wrote *Kamōsho* 呵妄書, a critique of *Bendōsho*, in which he engages with certain arguments made in *Naobi no mitama* and *Kokuikō*. Atsutane’s debut work, *Kamōsho* consists of a series of quotations from Shundai’s text, followed by Atsutane’s rebuttals. At the time he wrote *Kamōsho*, Atsutane had not yet joined Haruniwa’s academy, but he was already attempting to engage intellectually with both the Edo-ha and Norinaga’s students in Edo, and *Kamōsho* can be seen as part of his effort to promote himself in this arena.<sup>39</sup> Like many other critics of Shundai, Atsutane argues that the teachings of the ancient Chinese sages, while perhaps necessary in a wicked country like China, were not needed in ancient Japan.<sup>40</sup> He depicts Confucianism as a corrupting force, claiming that it disrupted the peacefulness of ancient Japan and the honest simplicity of the ancient Japanese (pp. 157–58). Also like many earlier critics of Shundai, he accepts Shundai’s characterization of the Confucian Way as a human creation, but presents this as a flaw rather than a virtue, echoing Mabuchi by commenting that “the Way of the sages . . . is a Way created very narrowly within the limits of the puny intelligence of humans” (p. 161). He then goes on to cite the passage from *Kokuikō*, discussed earlier, where Mabuchi explains the gentle workings of Heaven and Earth as resembling the gradual changing of the seasons and contrasts this with the rigidity of human creations, similar instead to an insistence that everything should change on the first day of each season (p. 161).<sup>41</sup>

Despite this approving reference to Mabuchi’s view of the Way as natural, Atsutane elsewhere takes a position closer to Norinaga in *Naobi no mitama*, writing, “The Way of the Imperial Land that I speak of is not natural (*shizen* 自然), nor is it humanly created. As I said earlier, it is the Way bestowed by the gods of Heaven and Earth” (p. 159). He acknowledges Shundai’s criticisms of

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of *Kamōsho*, including a comparison to Takanari’s *Ben Bendōsho*, see Ogasawara 1988, pp. 68–82. For a discussion of the relation between Atsutane’s early works and his quest to gain a foothold within the intellectual world of Edo, see McNally 2005, pp. 78–95.

<sup>40</sup> *Kamōsho*, pp. 166–68.

<sup>41</sup> In this passage, Atsutane mentions Mabuchi by name (as Agatai no okina 県居翁, or “the old man of Agatai”), and although he does not specifically say that he is citing *Kokuikō*, he includes a long passage taken from it almost verbatim (the source of the passage is *Kokuikō*, pp. 383–84).

Shinto as valid when applied to recent forms of Shinto, but maintains that these do not represent authentic Shinto, which for Atsutane is the native Way that made possible the ideal society of ancient Japan. He further comments positively on certain aspects of Tokugawa Shinto-Confucian syncretism, writing, “In the explanations of Yamazaki Ansai and Asami Keisai 淺見綱斎 [1652–1711], there is much that possesses the bold, fierce, and manly spirit of the Imperial Land” (pp. 180–81). In this way, even while his overall position in *Kamōsho* is closest to that of Norinaga, Atsutane affirms a range of Tokugawa formulations of a Japanese Way.

In 1803, the same year that Atsutane wrote *Kamōsho*, Izumi Makuni engaged in an acrimonious exchange of letters with Murata Harumi of the Edo-ha. The following year Makuni edited this correspondence under the title *Meidōsho* 明道書.<sup>42</sup> The disagreements between the two reveal conflicts over the interpretation of Mabuchi’s teachings, with Makuni assigning a central role to *Kokuikō* and its ideology of a native Japanese Way, while Harumi discounts the importance of this aspect of Mabuchi, instead defining him primarily as a literary figure. This difference translated into divergent ways of relating native texts to Confucianism: Makuni presents the study of ancient Japanese texts as a means to escape Confucianism; Harumi, on the other hand, positions such study as an extension of Confucian scholarship.

Taking Harumi to task for neglect of the native Japanese Way, in *Meidōsho*, Makuni challenges Harumi’s legitimacy as an heir to Mabuchi’s teachings. Mabuchi, Makuni points out, wrote *Kokuikō* to explain the superiority of “the great Way of the Imperial Land” to Confucianism and Buddhism. He continues, “The explanation that Mabuchi above all simply excelled in composing poetry in the ancient style is greatly at odds with his true intent. . . . Those who hope to drink from the current of the Kamo river [i.e., inherit Mabuchi’s teachings] must never ever forget the Japanese spirit (*Yamato damashii* 大和魂).”<sup>43</sup> Harumi openly refers to himself as a Confucian (*jusha* 儒者; p. 139), but defends himself against the charge of betraying Mabuchi by arguing that Mabuchi “was not one who taught people the Way” (p. 159). According to Harumi, *Kokuikō* was simply the product of Mabuchi’s frustration with “vulgar Confucians,” and should be considered “a slip of the tongue” (p. 159). The core of “[w]hat the Master of Agatai 県居 [Mabuchi] taught people was simply the composition of poetry and the interpretation of ancient texts” (p. 160). In a subsequent rejoinder, Makuni takes issue with this characterization of Mabuchi, pointing out passages in other of Mabuchi’s texts that express concerns similar to those found in *Kokuikō* (pp. 191–92).

Harumi and Makuni also discuss Norinaga’s definition of the Way in *Naobi no mitama*. Harumi disputes Norinaga’s idea of the Way as a creation, arguing that he was led astray by Sorai’s erroneous view of the Confucian Way as an

<sup>42</sup> This debate is discussed in McNally 2005, pp. 69–78.

<sup>43</sup> *Meidōsho*, p. 134.

invention of the Chinese sages. It was to counter this view that Norinaga insisted upon a Way created in Japan, rather than one created in China (p. 151). But, Harumi maintains, the Way “is something that exists naturally in Heaven and Earth” (p. 151); it does not belong exclusively to either China or Japan. While he rejects the idea that the Chinese sages created the Way, he still claims that their teachings are crucial in giving expression to the Way and making it something that can be used effectively for governance (p. 153). Before the importation of Chinese teachings, he writes, “in the ancient times of our country, there were none who spoke of the Way, and from the reign of Jinmu 神武 on, there is no mention of institutions (*seido* 制度) being established” (p. 152). He takes the lack of any explicit mention of a Way in ancient Japan as proof that Japan had no distinctive Way of its own: “The reason I say that our country had no Way is that in the words of the ancient people of our country there cannot be seen any term at all for the Way of our country. Moreover, in the ancient writings of our country, there are no writings at all that discuss the Way of our country” (pp. 153–54). Harumi is similar to Mabuchi in seeing the Way as existing spontaneously in the natural order, but unlike Mabuchi, he denies any special connection of this Way to Japan. Also, despite his difference with Shundai on the question whether the Way is natural or invented, Harumi agrees with him that the introduction of Chinese teachings was beneficial to ancient Japan, and not, as Mabuchi had claimed, a corrupting force.

Pointing out the similarity between Harumi’s logic and Shundai’s argument that the lack of names for virtues in ancient Japan implies that these virtues did not exist, Makuni criticizes harshly Harumi’s portrayal of ancient Japan (p. 192). But although Makuni is very clear in asserting that ancient Japan possessed its own Way, his framing of this in terms of Mabuchi’s and Norinaga’s philosophies involves certain ambiguities. On the one hand, he expresses agreement with Norinaga’s *Naobi no mitama* and claims that Mabuchi’s teachings are no different from the views Norinaga sets out in this text (p. 209). Elsewhere, he seconds Harumi’s statement that “the Way exists naturally in Heaven and Earth” (p. 183), an idea that is in keeping with Mabuchi’s philosophy in *Kokuikō*, but that Norinaga explicitly denies in *Naobi no mitama*.<sup>44</sup> And unlike Harumi, Makuni holds Japan to have a unique relationship to this Way. Makuni acknowledges that certain Confucian classics describe the “natural Way of Heaven and Earth,” citing, for example, the passage from the “Yue ji” 樂記 (Record of Music) chapter of the *Li ji* 札記 that states, “Heaven is lofty and Earth is lowly, and thus the relationship of ruler and subject is established” (p. 184). He maintains, however, that despite these explicit references to the Way in Chinese texts, and the lack of such references in ancient Japanese texts, the Way has been properly practiced and transmitted only in Japan (p. 184). He further distinguishes this Way from that described by Sorai, acknowledging that Sorai was correct to see the Way of the former kings as a human creation, but dismissing this as not being

<sup>44</sup> The gap between Makuni and Norinaga is pointed out in McNally 2005, p. 78.

the true Way (p. 185). Although Makuni does not accept the Confucian label, he resembles such self-identified Confucians as Sasaki Takanari in his view that there is a single universal Way rooted in the natural order, described in certain Confucian texts yet only fully manifested in Japan, and distinct from the creations of the historical sage kings. While Makuni allies himself with both Mabuchi and Norinaga, then, he presents certain ideas that diverge from those of both these figures and that overlap with other Tokugawa discourses on Japan's superiority.

### *The Publication of Kokuikō*

It was just two years after the end of the *Meidōsho* debate, in 1806, that *Kokuikō* appeared in a woodblock edition, and it was accompanied by a pair of essays that, much like *Meidōsho* and *Kamōsho*, offer a critical assessment of Mabuchi's notion of a native Japanese Way. The first of these was *Doku Kamo no Mabuchi Kokuikō* 読賀茂真淵国意考 (1781), an attack on *Kokuikō* by Nomura Kōdai 野村公台 (1717–1784), a follower of Sorai. The second was *Ben Doku Kokuikō* 弁讀国意考, a response to Kōdai written in 1806 by Hashimoto Inahiko 橋本稻彦 (1781–1809), who had enrolled in Norinaga's school in 1798. Inahiko, originally from Hiroshima, spent time studying under Norinaga in Matsusaka 松阪 and remained in contact with him after eventually settling in Osaka.

Kōdai points out Mabuchi's similarities to Daoism and criticizes him for ignoring the importance of the civilizing standards of the sages, commenting, "Mabuchi always goes on about 'straightforwardness,' but this so-called straightforwardness is the 'straightforwardness' of 'straightforward emotions and direct actions' and is the Way of barbarians."<sup>45</sup> He also charges that Mabuchi's theories are themselves dependent on what they criticize, arguing that Mabuchi "props himself up on the teachings of 'recovering the ancients' of our Ken'en 護園 [Sorai school]" (p. 42) and that his critique of the Chinese writing system is absurd, as "if he did not read Chinese books and borrow from the Chinese language, there is no way he would be able to write what he does"; Mabuchi is thus "like someone who steals a person's sword, attacks the person with it, breaks the sword, and then declares it useless" (p. 43).

Inahiko begins his response by noting the existence of an earlier rebuttal to Kōdai's piece, *Doku Kokuikō ni kotaaru fumi* 読国意考に答ふる書 (1781), by Kairyō 海量 (1733–1817), a Buddhist priest who had studied under Mabuchi.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *Doku Kokuikō*, p. 42. The phrase "straightforward emotions and direct actions" (*chokujō keikō* 直情徑行, Ch. *zhiqing jingxing*) is from the *Li ji*, where it is used in a discussion of mourning rites to indicate a failure to know ritual propriety: "Straightforward emotions and direct actions are the way of barbarians. The way of ritual is not so." Translation adapted from Legge 1885, vol. 1, p. 177.

<sup>46</sup> Kairyō and Kōdai were the only two figures who wrote works specifically responding to *Kokuikō* (as opposed to bringing up *Kokuikō* in the context of discussions of broader issues) prior to its publication. Two responses to *Kokuikō* from later in the nineteenth century, which I do not discuss here, were *Kokuikō benmō* 国意考弁妄 (1833), by Numata Yukiyoshi 沼田順義 (1792–1849), and *Kokuikō benmō zeigen* 国意考弁妄贅言 (1856), by Kubo Sueshige 久保季茲 (1830–1886). The various responses to *Kokuikō* are discussed in Dumoulin 1943, pp. 132–55.

Kairyō defends Mabuchi's idea that a Way existed in Japan prior to the introduction of Confucian teachings and cites various ancient poems as evidence that proper relations existed between rulers and subjects, and parents and children.<sup>47</sup> He goes on to argue that Mabuchi's ideal of straightforwardness should not be considered barbaric, that Chinese customs should not be used to judge Japan, and that Chinese characters are burdensome. In response to Kōdai's charge that Mabuchi is methodologically indebted to Sorai, Kairyō notes that the quest to understand ancient texts did not originate with Sorai and can be seen in such earlier figures as Jinsai, Arai Hakuseki 新井白石 (1657–1725), and Keichū 契沖 (1640–1701; p. 92). He is not uncritical of Mabuchi, though, as he concludes by noting that Mabuchi fails to grasp Buddhist truths, a limitation he shares with Confucians: "The teachings of the writings of our Imperial Land, and the teachings of noisy China, all explain teachings that have to do only with the form that humans take for the hundred years they live in the world. Buddhism explains teachings that are based on the heart, which is something without form and without limit" (p. 93). Of this Inahiko observes dismissively, "Kairyō is originally someone who followed the teachings of Shinran 親鸞 [1173–1262], so how would he know about the divine great Way of our country?"<sup>48</sup>

Inahiko has his own criticisms of Mabuchi, though, noting that "the way he speaks of the heart of Heaven and Earth, and of humans being [lowly] like insects, is all not in keeping with the meaning of our Way" (p. 46). Inahiko goes on to explain that these deficiencies have been remedied by Norinaga, stating that "my teacher Motoori, the great man of Suzunoya 鈴屋, has clarified these matters in detail in several works" (p. 46). Inahiko emphasizes particularly how Norinaga has clarified the importance of the gods, turning, for instance, to Norinaga's theory of the Musubi gods to counter Mabuchi's low view of humans: "Because humans are born with the spirit of the Musubi gods, they are extremely splendid. To say such things as that from the standpoint of Heaven and Earth they are nothing but insects is to fail to grasp deeply the meaning of the Way of the gods" (p. 53).

In essence, Inahiko positions Mabuchi and Norinaga as representing different stages in the evolution of a single tradition; Norinaga corrects Mabuchi's errors while preserving the basic essence of his thought, thus bringing his ideas to a higher level of completion. "All people who begin something, not just Mabuchi," Inahiko writes, "are one-sided. Therefore the words of this critic [Kōdai] are not without their valid points, but a great achievement cannot be obscured by minor faults, so for the sake of the great man Kamo I present the following arguments" (p. 46). The positioning of Mabuchi as an intermediate step in the development of Norinaga's philosophy is also evident in Inahiko's strategy for responding to certain of Kōdai's criticisms, where he salvages Mabuchi's points by revising them through a framework borrowed from Norinaga. To defend the ideal of "straightforwardness" promoted by Mabuchi, for example, Makuni reframes it

<sup>47</sup> *Doku Kokuikō ni kotauru*, pp. 86–87.

<sup>48</sup> *Ben Doku Kokuikō*, p. 45.

using Norinaga's view of the gods. For Mabuchi, "straightforwardness" meant to follow the innate Way of Heaven and Earth, but Inahiko defines this term by arguing that "in this country, in all things there are the regulations set down by the imperial gods, and the realm is governed by following these regulations, without using any private intelligence" (p. 50).

Similar to Makuni, Inahiko emphasizes the importance of Mabuchi's philosophy of a Japanese Way, but he goes much further than either Makuni or Atsutane in calling attention to the differences between Mabuchi's and Norinaga's formulations of such a Way. His acknowledgment of these differences makes it difficult for Inahiko to take the kind of ambiguous stance toward the Way that Makuni had. Instead, Inahiko comes down clearly on the side of Norinaga and his view of the Way as a creation of the gods. In this and in his divergence from Mabuchi's presentation of the Way as existing naturally in Heaven and Earth, Inahiko resembles Atsutane, but unlike Inahiko, Atsutane did not explicitly declare Mabuchi to be in error. Inahiko's criticisms of Mabuchi preclude a simple equation of Mabuchi's and Norinaga's ideas, and in one sense downgrade Mabuchi's importance. At the same time, Inahiko ultimately uses these criticisms to construct a more fully articulated account of how these two figures should be seen as linked and to assert the existence of a common intellectual tradition in which they both play critical roles. Such a view then gained currency in the late Tokugawa period, as evidenced, for example, by Ōkuni Takamasa's 大国隆正 (1792–1871) discussion of his scholarly lineage in *Gakutō benron* 学統弁論 (1857), where he lists his main intellectual forebears as Azumamaro, Mabuchi, Norinaga, and Atsutane, and notes that although it is not without its flaws, "among [Mabuchi's] many works, *Kokuikō* stands out."<sup>49</sup>

IN KOKUIKŌ, Mabuchi presents a powerful image of Japanese cultural identity as deriving from a primal unity with the forces of nature and a form of community based on complete honesty and transparency. His image of Confucianism is an integral part of this construction of Japan, as Confucianism is for him the force that corrupted Japan's original simplicity and harmony, introducing duplicity and fragmentation by subjecting all things to the constraining categories of human reasoning. In that Mabuchi was one of many thinkers, both before and after him, who in overlapping yet diverse ways sought to define Japan in relation to Confucianism, we should not automatically assign *Kokuikō* canonical status within the Tokugawa discourse on Japanese identity. To do so runs the risk of losing sight of the contingency of Mabuchi's vision of Japan and the diversity of the responses it evoked, much as *Bendōsho* had before it. At the same time, we may also acknowledge that the force with which Mabuchi expressed his view of Japan and his critique of Confucianism served to stimulate such responses as well as the ultimate enshrining of *Kokuikō* as one of the seminal texts of Kokugaku.

<sup>49</sup> *Gakutō benron*, p. 473.

# Reflections on the Meaning of Our Country

KAMO NO MABUCHI

TRANSLATED BY PETER FLUECKIGER

A CERTAIN person said to me, “I have no interest in such trivial matters as poetry (*uta* 歌). What interests me is the Way of China (*karakuni no michi* から國の道), which seeks to bring order to the world.” I just laughed and did not bother responding. Later, I encountered him again. “When I was explaining the principles of all things (*yorozu no koto o kotowaru* 万のことわざ), you just laughed,” he said, “There must be some reason for your reaction.” “What you speak of must be the Confucianism (*ju* 儒) of China,” I replied. “That is a human creation that arbitrarily makes the heart of Heaven and Earth into something very small.” He then grew very angry and said, “How can you call this great Way small?”

“I would like to hear about whether it has been effective in governing the realm,” I said, and he responded with such examples as Kings Yao 堯 and Shun 舜, and the Xia 夏, Yin 殷, and Zhou 周 dynasties.<sup>50</sup> “Are there none after that?” I asked. He replied that there were none. “How long is the recorded history of China?” I then asked. He answered, “From Yao to the present it is several thousand years.” I continued, “Why is it that the state of affairs that existed from Yao to the Zhou did not exist after that? It is only hundreds and thousands of years

MY TRANSLATION is based on the text in NST 39. I benefited from the extensive notes accompanying the NST text and also made use of existing annotated translations of *Kokuikō* into German (Dumoulin 1939) and modern Japanese (*Dai Nihon shisō zenshū*), as well as an unannotated modern Japanese translation (Fujita 1942). Although my translation is of the NST text, I referred to a variant text (*Kokui*) in deciphering certain passages. An existing full, but largely unannotated, translation of *Kokuikō* into English is Harootunian 1994, and a partial translation by Peter Nosco is included in de Bary 2005, pp. 491–96. The footnotes to the following translation include quotations from and references to passages from Chinese or Japanese texts alluded to directly or indirectly by Mabuchi. For the most part for these I have cited existing English translations, but where no such citation is given, the translation is my own. For the sake of consistency, when citing passages from English translations of Chinese texts that use Wade-Giles or other systems of romanization, I have converted these to pinyin (I do not specifically note where I have done this, but any other modifications to translations are noted). Where relevant I have also added characters for names and terms. Citations of section numbers from the *Analects* and *Mencius* are based on the Legge editions.

<sup>50</sup> Yao and Shun are the first two rulers described in the *Shu jing* and are held up as model sage kings. Shun’s successor, Yu 禹, founded the Xia dynasty, which was followed by the Yin (or Shang 商) and Zhou dynasties.

ago in ancient times, then, that there was such an ideal situation. It is really nothing more than a legend, though. Look and you will see that things in the world cannot be established only with your ‘principle’ (*kotowari* 理り).” When I said this, he became more and more angry and went on and on about ancient matters.

I told him that he was completely misled. While it may seem as if it were good for the realm that Yao yielded the throne to Shun, who was of lowly origin,<sup>51</sup> was this not excessively good, what in the Imperial Land (*sumeramikuni* 皇御国)<sup>52</sup> is called “hatefully good” (*yoshikirai* よしきらひ)? After that, lowly people who would not yield the throne emerged, and it came to pass that people would kill the ruler and seize the realm. This is “hatefully bad” (*ashikirai* あしきらひ).<sup>53</sup> In this way, when there is an excess of good, an excess of wickedness will surely follow.

A person called Mencius, or some such, said that the people of Yao and Shun could all be given fiefs.<sup>54</sup> If we think about this, though, we see that Shun’s father was called blind because he could not see the good qualities of his son.<sup>55</sup> He was of the people of Yao and was the father of Shun, but how could he be deserving of a fief? After Shun came Yu 禹. It is said that his father was a wicked man and was banished to a distant land.<sup>56</sup> He was of the people of Shun and was the father

<sup>51</sup> The *Shu jing* describes how Yao chose Shun as his successor because of Shun’s virtue, not holding his lowly social status against him. In choosing Shun, Yao bypassed his own son, whom he considered unworthy of the throne.

<sup>52</sup> That is, Japan. My translation is meant to reflect the self-conscious archaism in Mabuchi’s use of the term “*sumeramikuni*.”

<sup>53</sup> The terms “*yoshikirai*” and “*ashikirai*” appear in the *Nihongi* 日本紀, when after Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大御神 is drawn out of the cave where she had been hiding, Susanoo no Mikoto 須佐之男命 is punished for his various transgressions. As part of the purification ceremony for Susanoo, “*yoshikirai*” things are made from his fingernails and “*ashikirai*” things from his toenails (Aston 1896, vol. 1, pp. 48–50; Aston translates these terms as “things abhorrent of luck” and “things abhorrent of calamity”). It is not completely clear what these terms mean in the *Nihongi* passage, but they appear to be in some way related to the purification process. Mabuchi uses the terms in a different sense, though, which I have tried to replicate in my translations of them. Based on the context, he seems to be using “*yoshikirai*” to refer to the harm that comes from trying to conceptualize the good or be purely good, tendencies that he sees as characteristic of Confucianism, which he claims strives for an artificial and unattainable concept of morality. Here, for example, Yao tries to fulfill a notion of virtuous rule by choosing Shun as his successor, but this ultimately creates more problems than it solves. The term “*ashikirai*,” then, is used simply to mean “bad,” although with the added dimension of the wordplay that comes from the contrast with the term “*yoshikirai*.”

<sup>54</sup> This statement does not actually appear in *Mencius*, but can be found in a number of other texts. For example, Wang Chung 王充 (27–97) writes in *Lun heng* 論衡, “Under the rule of Yao and Shun people were neither seditious nor ignorant. Tradition says that the people of Yao and Shun might have been invested with fiefs house by house” (Forke 1907, vol. 1, p. 375).

<sup>55</sup> In the *Shu jing* Shun’s father is described as blind, but as Mabuchi indicates, this is often interpreted figuratively.

<sup>56</sup> The *Shu jing* describes Yao as reluctantly appointing Yu’s father, Gun 鯀, to put a stop to the floods that were causing the people to suffer, a task at which Gun failed: “The emperor said, ‘Oh! chief of the four mountains, destructive in their overflow are the waters of the inundation. In their vast extent they embrace the mountains and overtop the hills, threatening the heavens with their floods, so that the inferior people groan and murmur. Is there a capable man, to whom I can assign the correction of this calamity? All in the court said, ‘Oh! there is Gun.’ The emperor said, ‘Alas! no, by any means! He is disobedient to orders, and tries to injure his peers.’ His Eminence said, ‘Well but—. Try him, and then you can have done with him.’ The emperor said to Gun, ‘Go, and be reverent!’ For nine years he laboured, but the work was unaccomplished” (Legge 1865, pp. 24–25). Yao’s successor, Shun, then “held Gun till death a prisoner on Mount Yu 禹” (Legge 1865, p. 40).

of Yu, but would not he also be an unlikely person to invest with a fief? If this is so, then even the words of Mencius are no better than the glib talk of present-day fund-raising priests.

Moreover, how long did the Yin dynasty last?<sup>57</sup> At first Yu ceded the throne to a person he considered good, but why did the throne not continue to be passed on to good people?<sup>58</sup> Finally, did not an incomparably wicked person known as Zhou 紂 appear?<sup>59</sup> It seems it was only in ancient times, then, for one or two reigns, that the throne was passed on to a good person, and we cannot even be sure about this.

King Wen 文 of Zhou ruled over only a portion of the land,<sup>60</sup> but still he failed at this, and misfortune befell him.<sup>61</sup> Due to the wickedness of King Zhou, however, he was able to win over the hearts of the people.<sup>62</sup> In the time of King Wu 武, Zhou was killed, and this is evidently considered a just battle,<sup>63</sup> but Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齊 remonstrated against this,<sup>64</sup> and even Confucius seems to

<sup>57</sup> According to the traditional dates, the Yin dynasty lasted from 1765 B.C. to 1122 B.C., or 643 years.

<sup>58</sup> Yu passed on the throne to his son Qi 敗, who was then succeeded by his son, Tai Kang 太康, who is described in the *Shu jing* as a corrupt ruler: “Tai Kang occupied the throne like a personator of the dead. By idleness and dissipation he extinguished his virtue, till the black-haired people all began to waver in their allegiance. He, however, pursued his pleasure and wanderings without any restraint” (Legge 1865, p. 156).

<sup>59</sup> Zhou (Zhou) was the final ruler of the Yin dynasty and was famous as a wicked ruler. I write his name as “Zhou” to distinguish it from the Zhou dynasty. The *Shu jing* tells us of Zhou, “[He] does not reverence Heaven above, and inflicts calamities on the people below. He has been abandoned to drunkenness, and reckless in lust. He has dared to exercise cruel oppression. Along with criminals he has punished all their relatives. He has put men into office on the hereditary principle. He has made it his pursuit to have palaces, towers, pavilions, embankments, ponds, and all other extravagances. . . . He has burned and roasted the loyal and good. He has ripped up pregnant women” (Legge 1865, pp. 284–85).

<sup>60</sup> During his lifetime King Wen was a feudal lord known as “Lord of the West” (*xibo* 西伯). “King Wen” is a posthumous title that he was granted after his son Wu 武 defeated Zhou.

<sup>61</sup> The *Shi ji* 史記 describes Zhou as imprisoning Wen at Yuli 美里 after a report reached him that Wen had expressed dissatisfaction over Zhou’s cruel treatment of the Marquis of E 鄂, who was made into dried-meat strips after remonstrating against the execution of the Marquis of Jiu 九, who had himself been executed and made into mincemeat when his daughter, whom he had sent to be a concubine of Zhou, proved insufficiently debauched for the latter’s tastes (she was executed as well; Nienhauser 1994, vol. 1, p. 50).

<sup>62</sup> The *Shi ji* describes Wen (here referred to as “the Lord of the West”) as expanding his influence as follows: “After the Lord of the West returned to his own state, he secretly cultivated his virtue and practiced good. Many of the feudal lords rebelled against Zhou and turned to the Lord of the West. The Lord of the West’s influence] grew greater. This was how Zhou gradually lost power” (Nienhauser 1994, vol. 1, pp. 50–51).

<sup>63</sup> According to the *Shi ji*, “King Wu of Zhou at this point then led the feudal lords to subjugate Zhou. Zhou also sent out troops to resist them at Muye 牧野. On the *jiasi* 甲子 day, Zhou’s troops were defeated and he fled to climb Lutai 鹿臺. He put on his jade suit, jumped into a fire, and died. King Wu of Zhou then cut off Zhou’s head and hung it on a [pole with a] large, white banner. . . . The common people of Yin greatly rejoiced. At this point King Wu of Zhou became the Son of Heaven” (Nienhauser 1994, vol. 1, pp. 51–52).

<sup>64</sup> The biography of Bo Yi in the *Shi ji* states: “When King Wu had quelled the disorders of Yin, the world took [King Wu’s dynasty] Zhou as its leader; but Bo Yi and Shu Qi were ashamed to. Their principles would not allow them to eat the grain of Zhou, so they hid on Mount Shouyang 首陽, where they plucked ferns to eat. When their hunger had brought them to the verge of death, they made a song. Its words are: ‘We climb that West Mountain, / pluck its ferns / He replaces

have said that these two were good people.<sup>65</sup> How should we then view King Wu? If he were truly righteous (*gi* 義), he would have installed one of Zhou's descendants on the throne. Instead, he banished them to such places as Korea and passed on the throne to his own descendants.<sup>66</sup>

In *Mencius* we can see that after the Duke of Zhou took over the government, he had over forty feudal lords of Yin killed.<sup>67</sup> Could all of these have been wicked people? It is clear that he had them wiped out without justification, simply because they opposed him. Is this what is called "righteous"? Although this dynasty is said to have flourished for eight hundred years,<sup>68</sup> it was only perhaps in the first two generations, for about forty years, that it governed well.<sup>69</sup> Soon things became extremely disordered and declined greatly. Even during those first forty years or so, is it not said that such a good person as the Duke of Zhou was wronged by his younger brothers and had to flee the country?<sup>70</sup> Although disorder may be something inevitable, the fact that even brothers slandered each other is a sign of internal chaos and is the most extreme kind of disorder. We can see, then, that even in these first forty years the realm was not governed well.

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tyranny with tyranny, / without knowing his error. / The Shen Nung 神農 (The Divine Farmer), / Yu, and Xia have perished, / where shall we go, where to turn? / Alas, it's all over, / our lot nears its end!' Then they died of starvation on Mount Shouyang" (Nienhauser 1994, vol. 7, pp. 3–4).

<sup>65</sup> A number of passages in the *Analects* praise these two. These include 5:22: "The Master said, 'Bo Yi and Shu Qi did not keep the former wickednesses of men in mind, and hence the resentments directed towards them were few'" (Legge 1893, p. 181); 7:14: "'What sort of men were Bo Yi and Shu Qi?' 'They were ancient worthies,' said the Master. 'Did they have any repinings because of their course?' The Master again replied, 'They sought to act virtuously, and they did so; what was there for them to repine about?'" (Legge 1893, p. 199); 16:12: "Bo Yi and Shu Qi died of hunger at the foot of the Shouyang mountain, and the people, down to the present time, praise them" (Legge 1893, p. 315); and 18:8: "The Master said, 'Refusing to surrender their wills, or to submit to any taint in their persons;—such, I think, were Bo Yi and Shu Qi'" (Legge 1893, p. 336).

<sup>66</sup> According to the *Shi ji*, the Viscount of Ji 箕, Zhou's uncle, appalled at Zhou's behavior, pretended to be insane, made himself a slave, and was imprisoned by Zhou (Nienhauser 1994, vol. 1, p. 51). Later, when Wu took power, the Viscount of Ji was released from prison and enfeoffed in Korea. Mabuchi is implying that if Wu had really only been interested in establishing righteous government, and not in seizing power for himself, he would have allowed the Viscount of Ji to take the throne.

<sup>67</sup> *Mencius*, Bk. 3, Pt. 2, 9:6, states, "Zhugong 周公 [the Duke of Zhou] assisted King Wu, and destroyed Zhou. He smote Yan 奄, and after three years put its sovereign to death. He drove Feilian 飛廉 to a corner by the sea, and slew him. The states which he extinguished amounted to fifty" (Legge 1895, pp. 280–81).

<sup>68</sup> According to the traditional dates, the Zhou dynasty lasted from 1122 B.C. to 256 B.C., or 866 years.

<sup>69</sup> The first two reigns of the Zhou dynasty lasted a total of forty-four years; King Wu reigned for seven years and King Cheng 成 for thirty-seven years.

<sup>70</sup> Upon the death of King Wu, his younger brother the Duke of Zhou took control of the government until Wu's son, King Cheng, was old enough to rule for himself. The Duke of Zhou's brothers then plotted against him, as described in the *Shu jing*: "[T]he duke's elder brother, he of Guan 管, and his younger brothers, spread a baseless rumour through the kingdom, saying, 'The duke will do no good to the king's young son.' Upon this the Duke of Zhou represented to the two dukes, saying, 'If I do not take the law to these men, I shall not be able to make my report to our former kings.' He resided accordingly in the east for two years, when the criminals were got and brought to justice" (Legge 1865, pp. 357–59).

Later, during the reign of Wendi 文帝 in the Han dynasty, the realm seems to have been governed well for a time.<sup>71</sup> But then when a person of lowly origin would emerge, kill the ruler, and declare himself ruler, all the people of the land would bow their heads and follow him. On top of that, while they despised the countries that surrounded them and called them barbarian, when a person of lowly origin emerged from one of these countries and became ruler of China, everyone would bow down and obey him.<sup>72</sup> Is it not meaningless, then, how they earlier despised them for being barbarians? Clearly, the word “barbarian” did not mean the same thing in all ages.

In this way the world was disordered in every generation and was never governed well. In spite of this, people purported to explain the principles (*kotowari*) of the world, saying it was the Way of Confucianism. When one hears a little about this Way, it does not seem worthy of discussion, but because it explains things theoretically and in great detail, people readily listen and feel they understand. What is most important is that the land be governed well, and that people revere preservation of the succession from one generation to the next. Even if people say that there is such-and-such principle, in the actual world, although people may appear to be the same, their hearts differ. Therefore one should realize that although on the surface they may appear to follow, in their hearts they do not. When Confucianism was transmitted to this country it was explained that in China this principle was used to govern properly, but this was all just a lie. I would like to send those who are still deluded about this to China and show them what it is like. They would be as shocked as Urashima Tarō 浦島太郎 when he returned to his home village.<sup>73</sup>

This country was originally governed well in accordance with the heart of Heaven and Earth (*ametsuchi no kokoro no manimani* 天地の心のまにまに), without such petty theorizing (*kotowarimekitaru koto naki mama* 理りめきたることなきまま), but when these teachings that seemed plausible were suddenly introduced, they spread widely because people of antiquity, being straightforward (*naoki* なほき), naively took them to be true. From ancient times things had generally flourished reign after reign, but following the introduction of Confucianism, in the reign of Emperor Tenmu 天武, a great disturbance occurred.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Wendi reigned from 180 B.C. to 157 B.C.

<sup>72</sup> A reference to such dynasties as the Yuan (1260–1368), founded by Mongols, and the Qing (1644–1911), founded by Manchus.

<sup>73</sup> A reference to the folktale in which a fisherman, Urashima Tarō, falls in love with the daughter of the Sea God and goes to live with her in the Sea God’s palace. After three years he decides to go back to visit his home village, but when he arrives he finds that hundreds of years have passed and nothing remains. Before leaving for his village he had been given a casket by the daughter of the Sea God, with instructions not to open it under any circumstances. In hopes of bringing back his old home, he opens the casket, upon which he suddenly ages and dies. Versions of this story appear in the *Nihongi* (seventh month of Yūryaku 雄略22; Aston 1896, vol. 1, p. 368); and *Man'yōshū* 1740–1741.

<sup>74</sup> A reference to the Jinshin 壬申 Disturbance of 672, a succession dispute that arose after the death of Emperor Tenji 天智 (626–671; r. 662–671). After Tenji’s death, his son Prince Ōtomo 大友 (648–672) ascended the throne, but Tenji’s younger brother Prince Ōama 大海人 (?–686), later

Subsequently at the Nara court, caps, robes, furniture, and other things were changed to the Chinese style. While on the surface everything became elegant, there came to be many people with wicked hearts. Since Confucianism leads people to have crafty hearts, they made the ruler excessively lofty so that people would revere him, and thus people came to have a servile mentality.

Later such things even came to pass as the awesome emperor being banished to an island.<sup>75</sup> All these things happened after the introduction of Confucianism. Some people say that Buddhism is bad, but it simply makes people's hearts stupid (*oroka* おろか), and the ruler will not flourish if the people's hearts are not stupid. Therefore Buddhism is not so harmful.<sup>76</sup>

Just as a path emerges naturally (*onozukara*) in rough mountains and wild fields, so, too, in this country the Way of the Age of the Gods spread naturally. And naturally the flourishing of the Way appropriate to the country led as well to the emperors flourishing more and more. It is unquestionably Confucianism that has not only brought about disorder in China, but has also done the same in this country. How foolish to fail to understand the essence of things and look only at the surface, and as a consequence to value Confucianism alone and consider it a tool for governing the realm.

Poetry is something that expresses the human heart. Although it may seem to be something of no use that we could just as well do without, when one understands poetry, one will also naturally understand the causes of peace and disorder. Indeed, it must have been for this reason that even Confucius did not discard the Odes, but made them first among the books.<sup>77</sup> To try to define things unequivocally in terms of principle is to treat them as dead objects.<sup>78</sup> It is the things that occur naturally, in accordance with Heaven and Earth, that are alive and active. Although it is not bad to have a general knowledge of things, people tend to go to extremes with this. Having gained knowledge, it is best to discard it. Although

to be known as Tenmu, attacked Ōtomo's court in Ōmi from his own base in Yoshino. Defeated, Ōtomo committed suicide. Ōama then ascended the throne and reigned from 672 to 686.

<sup>75</sup> Among others, in the Kamakura period, Emperors Go-Toba 後鳥羽 (1180–1239; r. 1183–1198) and Go-Daigo 後醍醐 (1288–1339; r. 1318–1339) were banished to Oki island.

<sup>76</sup> The idea that the people need to be kept "stupid" parallels certain ideas in Daoism. For example, the  *states, "[I]n governing the people, the sage empties their minds but fills their bellies. He always keeps them innocent of knowledge and free from desire, and ensures that the clever never dare to act" (Lau 1963, p. 7); and "Of old those who excelled in the pursuit of the way did not use it to enlighten people but to hoodwink them. The reason why the people are difficult to govern is that they are too clever" (Lau 1963, p. 72).*

<sup>77</sup> There are a number of passages in the *Analects* that stress the importance of learning the Odes, such as 16:13: "If you do not learn the Odes, you will not be fit to converse with" (Legge 1893, p. 315); and 17:9: "The Master said, 'My children, why do you not study the Book of Poetry? The Odes serve to stimulate the mind. They may be used for purposes of self-contemplation. They teach the art of sociability. They show how to regulate feelings of resentment. From them you learn the more immediate duty of serving one's father, and the remoter one of serving one's prince. From them we become largely acquainted with the names of birds, beasts, and plants'" (Legge 1893, p. 323).

<sup>78</sup> Jinsai makes a similar argument: "The term 'the Way' is a living word, as it describes the wonder of constant generation and transformation. Terms like 'principle' are dead words. . . . The sages take Heaven and Earth to be something living" (*Gomō jigi*, p. 31). For a translation of *Gomō jigi*, see also Tucker 1998.

poetry may express wicked and immoral desires, this does not cause the heart to become disordered; instead the heart is made gentle and opened up to all things. (I have already spoken elsewhere of the benefits of poetry.)<sup>79</sup>

In governing the people of the realm, just because one knows about matters of China does not mean that one will be able to respond to the current situation on the basis of principle. Rather, people will naturally emerge who, grasping the particular circumstances, put forth wise and convincing solutions. To make a comparison to medicine, doctors well read in Chinese books are seldom able to cure illness,<sup>80</sup> whereas the medicines that have been naturally passed down in this country, without any discussion of the grounding or principle behind them, always provide an effective cure. The best way to understand things is to devote one's heart to them entirely and not be trapped by preconceptions. Once people make up their minds about something, they let their prejudices pull them along.<sup>81</sup> This is why Confucians cannot understand how to govern, as is evident from the many instances of poor rulership in China when the government has been entrusted to them.

A certain person said, "In the past people took wives from their own families in this country and were no different from birds and beasts, but after the Way of China was introduced, they became aware that this was wrong, and everything improved on account of Confucianism."<sup>82</sup> When I heard this I laughed out loud,

<sup>79</sup> In his *Ka'ikō*, written in 1764, Mabuchi describes poetry as a way to recover the pristine heart of the ancient Japanese, writing, "It is in ancient poetry that the feelings and words composed by people a thousand years ago remain completely unchanged with the passage of time. . . . If one heeds the courtly style . . . and makes efforts over time to compose poetry, the ancient style will naturally permeate one's own heart. Then one will surely grasp the lofty and manly spirit of the ancients, whose straightforward hearts and courtly words had not a speck of filth or dust. . . . One will come to know of the reigns of the gods, who with their tranquil and lofty great Way governed our peaceful country in ancient times in accordance with Heaven and Earth, without regulation, fabrication, force, or instruction. It is the poetry of the ancients that makes this clear, and one's own poetry should be the same" (*Ka'ikō*, p. 351).

<sup>80</sup> Chinese medical books were the basis of medicine as practiced in Japan at the time.

<sup>81</sup> Mabuchi's portrayal of Song Confucian "principle" is similar to certain arguments made by Sorai, who charges that this "principle" creates a set of rigid preconceptions that are applied to all things, making no allowances for the nuances and complexity of empirical reality. Discussing Song Confucian practices of seeking knowledge, Sorai writes, "Because they follow along with what they themselves decide ahead of time something must be like, they are unable to realize that many things actually end up not being like what they thought" (*Sorai sensei tōmonsho*, p. 477). Commenting specifically on the rigid moral judgments that Zhu Xi makes in his historical work *Tongjian gangmu* 通鑑綱目, Sorai remarks, "[Its arguments] are like a woodblock print—they have a fixed form and a predetermined logic and apply this to everything. But Heaven and Earth are dynamic, as are humans. When we view these as if they were tied up with rope, it is truly a useless form of study" (*Sorai sensei tōmonsho*, p. 432). For a translation of *Tōmonsho*, see also Yamashita 1994.

<sup>82</sup> Describing ancient Japan in *Bendōsho*, Shundai writes, "Because there was no ritual and rightness, from the Age of the Gods until the time of the fortieth human emperor, even rulers married siblings and other relatives. At that time Japan came to have contact with other countries. The Way of the Chinese sages came to be practiced in this country, and in all matters of the realm they learned from China. From that point people in this country knew ritual and rightness, became aware of the Way of human ethics, and did not commit the acts of beasts" (*Bendōsho*, p. 224).

and the person next to me said, “In China there is a rule against taking a wife with the same surname,<sup>83</sup> but there are even cases of people having incestuous relations with their own mothers. Such a rule simply exists, then, and in reality there must be many wicked things. Cannot people see that? They may say that one should not take a wife with the same surname, but is it not foolish to believe that everybody refrained from doing so? Or is it that they conceal such things?”

In ancient times in our Imperial Land, it was only children of the same mother who were considered true siblings, and so long as people had different mothers, they were not prohibited to marry. It is best that things be determined in accordance with what is appropriate to each particular place. In ancient times, things flourished year after year, but following the introduction of Confucianism, things steadily became disordered, and in the end came to be as I have described above. In China, no matter how much they put forth detailed teachings such as the rule against marrying someone with the same surname, the throne dynasty after dynasty still continued to be seized, and lowly people from the surrounding countries took over the country. How is this? The world cannot be governed by detailed principles, and the fools who do not realize this simply take at face value what they hear.<sup>84</sup> This is not even worth discussing.

To insist that humans are different from the birds and beasts is to praise oneself as a human and look down on what is around one. This sort of thing is a bad habit of the Chinese. It is similar to the way they despise the people of bordering lands as barbarians, which in the end does not stand up to actuality. Are not all things that live between Heaven and Earth merely insects? Why is it that among them only humans are noble? What is so different about humans? In China they place great value on humans as the loftiest of all things (*banbutsu no rei* 万物の靈),<sup>85</sup> but in my opinion humans should be considered the worst of all things. Just as Heaven and Earth, and the sun and the moon, continue on unchanged, birds, beasts, fish, plants, and trees all remain as they were in the past. Humans, however, with their half-baked understanding of things, pursue their own reasoning. As a result, various wicked intentions arise between people, and the world becomes disordered. Even in times of good government people deceive each other. If there were only one or two intelligent people in the world, things would likely be fine, but when everyone is intelligent, people attack each other over every little thing, and in the end their intelligence is useless. So in the eyes

<sup>83</sup> The *Li ji* states, “One must not marry a wife of the same surname with himself” (Legge 1885, vol. 1, p. 78); and “By the united action of heaven and earth all things spring up. Thus the ceremony of marriage is the beginning of a (line that shall last for a) myriad ages. The parties are of different surnames; thus those who are distant are brought together, and the separation (to be maintained between those who are of the same surname) is emphasized” (Legge 1885, vol. 1, p. 439).

<sup>84</sup> In other words, people are drawn in by plausible-sounding theories, even though closer inspection would reveal these theories to be at odds with reality. Here Mabuchi continues with his criticism of applying fixed, artificially constructed principles to all things, rather than responding appropriately to the particular situation at hand.

<sup>85</sup> The *Shu jing* states, “Heaven and Earth are the parents of all things, and of all things humans are the loftiest” (translation adapted from Legge 1865, p. 283).

of birds and beasts, it must be humans who look bad, and they must teach that it is wrong to imitate us.

If we looked into the origins of humans, we would probably find that all lineages have branched off from the same siblings. To make particular rules despite this prohibiting marriage within the same lineage goes against Heaven and Earth. Look at how many violate such rules!

The same person went on, “This country, though, has no writing of its own. Instead, we use Chinese characters and through these are able to know about everything.” My response was that first of all, it goes without saying that China is a troublesome and poorly governed country. To give a specific example, there are the characters in the form of pictures. When we look at the characters that someone has put forth as just the ones necessary for ordinary use, they amount to some 38,000.<sup>86</sup> To describe a single flower, for example, one needs to use different characters for blooming, scattering, pistil, plant, stem, and more than ten other things. Moreover, there are characters that are used in the name of a specific country or place, or for a particular type of plant, but are used nowhere else. Could people remember so many characters even if they tried? Sometimes people make mistakes with characters, and sometimes the characters change over time, leading to disputes over their usage; they are burdensome and useless.

In India, though, using fifty characters,<sup>87</sup> they have written and passed down over five thousand volumes of Buddhist texts.<sup>88</sup> Just knowing fifty characters, it is possible to know and transmit a limitless number of words from both past and present. Moreover, it is not only a matter of the characters; the fifty sounds are the voice of Heaven and Earth (*ametsuchi no koe* 天地の声), so what they contain within them is natural (*onozukara*). In the same way, there seem to have been some kind of characters in our Imperial Land as well,<sup>89</sup> but after the introduction of Chinese characters, this original writing sunk wrongly into obscurity, and now only the ancient words remain. Although these words are not the same as the fifty sounds of India, they are based on the same principle in that fifty sounds suffice to express all things.<sup>90</sup> To repeat the example of the flower

<sup>86</sup> A manuscript version of the text names the person as Dansheng 誕生, the *zi* 字 of the Ming scholar Mei Yingzuo 梅膺祚, who compiled a dictionary called *Zihui* 字彙 containing 33,079 characters. An edition of this work was printed in Japan in 1672. Mabuchi is obviously exaggerating the number of characters necessary for everyday use in Chinese.

<sup>87</sup> There are a number of scripts that have been used for Sanskrit. The most commonly known in Japan was the Siddham script, brought to Japan in 806 by Kūkai 空海 (774–835), which contains 16 vowels and 35 consonants.

<sup>88</sup> The *Kaiyuan shijiao mulu* 開元釈經目錄 (Kaiyuan Buddhist Index), completed in China in 730, lists 5,048 volumes. Kaiyuan 開元 (713–741) is the name of the era in which the index was completed.

<sup>89</sup> A reference to theories that posited the existence of *jindai moji* 神代文字 (also read as “*kamiyo moji*”), or “writing from the Age of the Gods.” Hirata Atsutane was a later major proponent of this idea.

<sup>90</sup> Fifty is an approximate figure derived from the five vowels in Japanese (a, i, u, e, o) plus their combination with the nine consonants k, s, t, n, h, m, y, r, w (voiced consonants are not counted separately here, nor is the isolated “n” sound included). The actual number of sounds produced

discussed above, we can just say “blooming,” “scattering,” “budding,” “fading,” “pistil,” “stem,” and the like; without needing to resort to characters, one can easily express both the good and the bad, and there is nothing troublesome. In Holland they have twenty-five characters, in this country there are fifty, and, in general, characters are like this in all countries. Only China concocted a cumbersome system, so things are disorderly there and everything is troublesome.

Although Chinese characters came to be used in our country, in ancient times they only borrowed the characters’ sounds (*on 音*) and used these to represent the words of our own country.<sup>91</sup> After a while they also mixed in the meanings (*kokoro ころ*) of the characters, but they still used only the Japanese readings (*kun 訓*) and were not overly concerned with the Chinese meanings.<sup>92</sup>

The first volume of the *Man'yōshū* contains the following envoy to a poem by Ikusa no Ōkimi 軍主.<sup>93</sup>

山越乃 風乎時自見寝夜不落家在妹乎懸而小作櫃  
*yamakoshi no / kaze o tokijimi / nuru yo ochizu*  
*ie naru imo o / kakete shinubitsu*

At the mountain pass / the winds blow unceasingly, / so every night in my sleep / I long for / my wife at home

There are about four thousand poems in the *Man'yōshū*, so I cannot discuss them all, but one should look at them and understand them. Here I have just cited one that is easy to remember. It uses only Japanese readings of characters.

In this way, the words were the masters and the characters were the servants, so people used characters as they saw fit. Later, though, it was as if the words, which

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from these combinations is less than fifty, due to overlaps in pronunciation. In *Goikō* (1769), Mabuchi recognizes forty-eight distinct sounds, with the only overlaps being *i/yi* and *u/wu* (*Goikō*, p. 400).

<sup>91</sup> This refers to the phonetic representation of Japanese words by Chinese characters chosen for their sound value in Chinese, without regard for the meaning of the words that these characters represent in Chinese. The kana syllabaries have their origin in this usage of Chinese characters. An example of this from the poem Mabuchi quotes immediately below is the use of the character 乃 to represent the particle *no*.

<sup>92</sup> In other words, Chinese characters were used to convey native Japanese words that had meanings identical or similar to the Chinese words represented by the characters. When Mabuchi writes that people at this time were not overly concerned with Chinese meanings, he perhaps has in mind that the choice of characters to convey Japanese words was based on simply a rough correlation between these Japanese words and the Chinese words the characters represented, without any attempt to draw exact equivalences between the two languages. Chinese characters could be introduced, then, without importing Chinese ways of thinking. He might also be referring to a practice whereby people used a Chinese character to represent a Japanese word, but then used that Japanese word itself phonetically, so to speak, in a context unconnected to the word itself. For example, in the poem that Mabuchi subsequently quotes, the character 櫃 is used to represent the Japanese word *hitsu* (box or chest). In the context of the poem, though, only the sound value of the word is used, as part of *shinubitsu*, which consists of the *ren'yōkei* 連用形 of the verb *shinubu* (to long for), plus the perfective auxiliary verb *tsu*.

<sup>93</sup> This section in smaller font appears as a marginal note in the original text. The poem quoted is *Man'yōshū* 6. No biographical information is available on Ikusa no Ōkimi. According to its preface in the *Man'yōshū*, the quoted poem was composed during the reign of Emperor Jomei 舒明 (r. 629–641), although it is not clear if this dating is accurate.

had been the masters, lost their position and were replaced by the characters that had been the servants. Such a development shows the influence of the wicked Chinese custom of lowly people becoming the ruler, so it is unspeakably foolish not to recognize how despicable this development was and to think only that Chinese characters are something splendid.

A certain person then said, “Barbarians will do just anything, but China alone is elegant (*fuga* 風雅), and that is why things developed in this way.” I looked up at the sky and laughed. True elegance is something that, because forcing principle on things of the world brings about disorder, instead goes beyond principle and, not getting caught up in it, just naturally soothes and pacifies the heart in the way that all the things of Heaven and Earth take on natural patterning (*kazari* 文).

In China as well it is said that in ancient times they knotted rope,<sup>94</sup> and after that did they not make characters from pictures of various things like trees, grasses, birds, and beasts? The fifty characters of India were perhaps also originally derived from pictures of things. In any case, characters are quite common in origin, so why should we think of them as elegant? The round style was later developed into the square style,<sup>95</sup> and people came to speak about such things as the rules of calligraphy. This is truly laughable. If these characters would somehow disappear, we would receive natural characters (*onozukara naru ji* おのづからなる字) from Heaven, the country would be governed well, and these disputes would come to an end.

Since I have been discussing the meanings (*kokoro* 意) and words (*kotoba* 詞) of ancient poetry, people may think that this only concerns poetry. As I have said, though, this poetry expresses the meanings and words of antiquity. Through ancient poetry we come to know the ancient meanings and words, and through these we can then know the state of the world in ancient times. From knowing the conditions of ancient times, we can go back further and consider matters of the Age of the Gods. In later times, there have been many who speak about the Books of the Age of the Gods.<sup>96</sup> If you listen to them, you find that they construct theories about everything and give things deep meaning, describing the Age of the Gods as if it were right before their eyes. Moreover, they explain these things as if they could be determined exhaustively by the human heart. But how could these people have such knowledge? Although they may give the impression that they know much about ancient matters, when one examines their writings it becomes clear that they do not know anything at all. As they do not know

<sup>94</sup> That is, as a form of writing. The  *notes such a custom as part of a description of an idyllic primitive society: “Bring it about so that the people will return to the use of the knotted rope, / Will find relish in their food / And beauty in their clothes, / Will be content in their abode / And happy in the way they live” (Lau 1963, p. 87).*

<sup>95</sup> This seems to be a reference to the more angular style of script that became standard in the Han dynasty.

<sup>96</sup> The Books of the Age of the Gods are the first two books of the *Nihongi*, which were subject to much exegesis and often allegorical elaboration in the medieval and early modern periods.

about the human age of antiquity, how could they go back even further and know about the Age of the Gods? All this came about because they read a few Chinese writings and envied the manner of those of the Song dynasty, who, declaiming about the notion of principle, made the already extremely narrow Confucian Way even narrower.<sup>97</sup> They thus proceeded surreptitiously to apply these ideas to matters of the Age of the Gods in this country.<sup>98</sup> While people without any learning may be taken in by these interpretations, those who have even a little knowledge of the writings of Japan and China, realizing what has been added on to the original texts, can only laugh.

What existed in China, though, in the earliest times?<sup>99</sup> Since what they have was constructed later by humans, do people believe that things should be humanly constructed here as well? Things made by relying on the human heart are full of errors. When we look at the creations of the learned men of China we see that they do not accord with the heart of Heaven and Earth, and for this reason no later generations were able to make use of their Way. Rather, Laozi's saying that one should simply act in keeping with Heaven and Earth (*ametsuchi no mani-mani* 天地のまにまに) surely accords better with the Way of the world. From this we can see that in ancient times in China, too, things were straightforward. Here as well, things were completely straightforward, like the heart of the poetry I spoke of above. In antiquity words were few, and so were things. When things are few and people's hearts are straightforward, complicated teachings are unnecessary. Even without teachings, things go well because people are straightforward. People's hearts are diverse, so bad things do occur, but since even bad things are done with a straightforward heart, people do not conceal them. Not being concealed, they do not develop into anything major and come to an end after only a momentary disturbance. It is not as if there were no teachings of good people in ancient times, but light guidance was all that was needed.

China, though, is a wicked country, so even with deep teachings, although things may appear good on the surface, in the end people commit heinous acts and bring disorder to the world. This country being originally a country of straightforward people, the limited teachings they received were upheld, and people acted in accordance with Heaven and Earth. Everything thus went well without teachings. But then the Way of China was introduced, and people's hearts became wicked, so that even though teachings similar to those of China were put forth, they were something that having been heard in the morning, was forgotten by evening. Our country was not like this in antiquity. In keeping with Heaven and Earth, the emperor was like the sun and moon, and subjects were

<sup>97</sup> A reference to Song Confucians such as Zhu Xi who saw "principle" as the unifying force that gives normative order to the cosmos and interpreted Confucian texts in light of such theories.

<sup>98</sup> A criticism of scholars such as Yamazaki Ansai, who in works like *Jindai no maki kōgi* 神代の巻講義 drew correspondences between Confucian concepts and various elements of the myths of the Age of the Gods.

<sup>99</sup> The rhetorical question here implies that China did not have the kind of Way that Japan had possessed from the time of the Age of the Gods.

like the stars. Since stars, as subjects, protect the sun and moon, just as one can see today, they never obscure the sun and moon. And just as the sun and moon and stars in the heavens continued from the past, the sun and moon of the emperor and the subject stars also continued unchanged, and the world was orderly and peaceful. Then, however, lowly people emerged,<sup>100</sup> the emperor went into decline, and the court nobles went into decline along with him. One should explain the Books of the Age of the Gods by taking into consideration the spirit of what I have been discussing. In order to grasp this spirit, one should study the ancient meanings and words through ancient poetry, as well as read carefully the works I mentioned earlier.<sup>101</sup>

A certain person scorned our country, saying, “In ancient times humaneness (*ren* 仁, Jp. *jin*), rightness (*yi* 義, Jp. *gi*), ritual (*li* 礼, Jp. *rei*), and wisdom (*zhi* 智, Jp. *chi*) did not exist in our country, so there were no Japanese words (*wago* 和語) for them.”<sup>102</sup> This is an immature argument. In China they established these five virtues, and declared that anything that diverged from these was wicked.<sup>103</sup> These five virtues exist naturally in the world, though, just like the four seasons. How can there be anywhere in the world where such a heart does not exist?<sup>104</sup> However, just as in the progression of the seasons, spring gradually becomes mild and summer likewise gradually turns hot, the workings of Heaven and Earth are gradual and smooth. If it were to be as the Chinese say, on the first day of spring it should suddenly become warm and on the first day of summer immediately turn hot. This Chinese manner of teaching goes against Heaven and Earth; it is hasty and rigid. When people hear a bit of this teaching, it seems intelligent and clear and reasonable, but in reality things cannot work like this, as it goes against the way Heaven and Earth generate the gradual progression of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Humans are as insignificant as insects in relation to Heaven and Earth, so how can they successfully practice teachings that do not follow the heart of Heaven and Earth and instead hastily try to force things? Just as there are divisions between the four seasons, among the things of the world, affection, anger, reasonableness, and understanding also exist naturally,<sup>105</sup> and

<sup>100</sup> A variant text includes here the additional passage “the emperors, studying Chinese writings, naturally fell under their influence” (*Kokui*, p. 1145).

<sup>101</sup> It is not clear exactly which works Mabuchi is referring to here.

<sup>102</sup> In *Bendōsho*, Shundai writes, “Proof that there was originally no Way in Japan can be seen in the fact that there are no Japanese words for humaneness, rightness, ritual, music, filial piety, and brotherly obedience. There are always Japanese words for things that originally existed in Japan. When there is no Japanese word for something, it is because it did not originally exist in Japan” (*Bendōsho*, pp. 223–24). When Shundai writes about the lack of “Japanese words” (he uses the term *wakun* 和訓 while Mabuchi uses *wago*), he refers specifically to the lack of *kun-yomi* 訓読み that represent native Japanese words, as opposed to *on-yomi* 音読み derived from Chinese words.

<sup>103</sup> Mabuchi shifts here from four virtues to five without any explanation, but there does not seem to be any deep significance to this discrepancy. The “five virtues” in Confucianism generally refers to the four virtues Mabuchi lists above, plus faithfulness (*xin* 信, Jp. *shin*).

<sup>104</sup> That is, a heart endowed with these five virtues.

<sup>105</sup> Mabuchi presents these qualities, identified by the Japanese words *itsukushima*, *ikari*, *koto-wari*, and *satori*, as emotions corresponding to the virtues of humaneness, rightness, ritual

they will not cease so long as the seasons continue. Things end up becoming constrained because humans, apart from this, create particular names such as humaneness, rightness, ritual, and wisdom. It is better to do without such names and just go along with the heart of Heaven and Earth. Do people not realize that our country was long governed well by doing exactly this? It is not worth trying to explain this to those foolish people who only stick narrowly to what they are accustomed to seeing right in front of them, but for the sake of those who are young and do not understand these things, I will continue.

The learning of China is from the beginning something created by humans on the basis of their own hearts, so it is fabricated with sharp, square angles and is easy to grasp. The Ancient Way of our Imperial Land is round and smooth in accordance with Heaven and Earth, and it cannot easily be described exhaustively with the meanings and words of humans, so it is difficult for people of later times to understand it.<sup>106</sup> People may therefore wonder whether the Ancient Way has not been completely extinguished, but so long as Heaven and Earth do not perish, neither will this Way. It is just that things have come to be as they are on account of that easy-to-grasp Chinese Way. When we consider the duration of Heaven and Earth, though, five hundred or a thousand years is not even a blink of an eye. The Ancient Way is not something that pays respect to the narrow-minded things that people say.

Everything that exists naturally in accordance with Heaven and Earth is round, beginning with the sun and moon. To make a comparison to dew on a blade of grass, when dew forms on a sharp-cornered blade, it conforms to the blade's shape, but when it is placed on a flat surface, it returns to its original roundness. With government as well, it is by being based on this roundness that good government comes about. That being rigid and judgmental leads to bad government can be seen from the history of China. Since roundness is the heart of Heaven and Earth, at the appropriate time, things should be returned to their original state. Hastily trying to deal with things on the basis of a vulgar and narrow human heart will only result instead in disorder.

In China those in high positions make a display of their power and status, but it is better to appear simple, as the flaunting of exalted status is a cause of disorder. As a means of showing authority, nothing surpasses the Way of the warrior (*mononofu no michi* もののふの道). You should not forget this in your actions.

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propriety, and wisdom. He is not entirely consistent in his treatment of the term *kotowari*, as here he presents it as a positive quality. Given the context of this statement, he is presumably using the term in this instance to refer to a kind of natural and intuitive reasonableness, as opposed to the rigid, artificial rationalizing that he criticizes when he uses the same term elsewhere in a negative sense. In arguing that true virtue is embodied in naturally occurring emotions rather than rigidly defined moral codes, Mabuchi reverses Zhu Xi's argument that emotions (even morally virtuous ones) are secondary to the moral principle that underlies them.

<sup>106</sup> The logic in this section is that human reasoning can always comprehend its own creations, since, as products of this reasoning, such creations necessarily must conform to its categories. The natural world, on the other hand, exists beyond these categories, making it difficult for humans to grasp.

You should especially look at how our Imperial Land is founded on this Way. The merit of appearing simple is that those below, observing the simplicity of those above, are filled with awe and, seeking to follow this example, come to live simply. Living simply, they have few desires; having few desires, they have few worries, and having few worries, they are at peace. To make a display of status is bad. Those people who, seeing the palace and the clothes, the adornments of the court ladies and the fine robes of the courtiers, think this is truly noble and feel genuine reverence, most likely would not cause any trouble even were there no such display of exalted status. There will occasionally be those, though, who have an ambition that stretches as far as Heaven and Earth and who believe that to achieve such status is their true purpose as stalwart men. Resolving to leave the fate of their short lives to Heaven, they plot to seize power. There are also those who, not quite so forceful, keep their thoughts bottled up inside. How great their envy must be! All people of ability are sure to feel, "Here I am! I can't wait for a disturbance, no matter where it comes from! I'll seize the opportunity and carry out my plot!"

Were this country in accordance with Heaven and Earth, in the manner passed down since ancient times, when the emperor's dwelling had a shingled roof and earthen walls, and he went out hunting with a bow and arrow, wearing mulberry fiber and hempen clothes and bearing a vine-wrapped sword,<sup>107</sup> could things have declined to the point they have today? People are attracted to beautiful things and enjoy putting on airs, so from the time they started to envy the ways of the Chinese, they concentrated on making the palace and the clothing of the nobles splendid. The emperors above became excessively grand, while their hearts turned foolish and effeminate. Those below became excessively clever and outdid the emperor, resulting in subjects taking over the government. Therefore, even though the emperor's person was exalted, his heart degenerated. The subjects for their part assumed a role like that of the emperor in the past. Unlike in China they may not have usurped his title or humiliated him, but, although there continued to be an emperor, it was as if he had become nothing. When we examine whether the subjects could maintain their positions in such circumstances, we see that the old ones were pushed aside by new ones, and only their family names were passed on. This came about through the error of forgetting the Way of this country and following the Way of a foreign land.

A certain person asked, "Are you saying that in ancient times there were no wicked people and no disorder in the world?" I replied that this question arises from a failure to understand the word "straightforward." When the heart is straightforward, everything is simple, and when things are simple, the heart does not become entangled. When people are straightforward, occasionally there are

<sup>107</sup> In the *Kojiki*, Yamato Takeru no Mikoto 倭建命 tricks the hero of Izumo 出雲 by exchanging swords with him after replacing his own sword with a wooden substitute and wrapping it in vines. Yamato Takeru no Mikoto then challenges and kills the hero of Izumo, who has been rendered defenseless (Philippi 1968, pp. 236–37). Mabuchi appears to be simply adopting the image of the vine-wrapped sword, rather than making any particular reference to this episode.

those who do bad things or want to seize power, but because these desires arise out of a straightforward heart, they are not concealed. Because they are not concealed, they are quickly stamped out and do not result in any serious disturbance. Even when people are straightforward there are always a few bad things, but these are easy to suppress, like a brawl between the simple people of a village.

It is foolish to believe that of all the living things in the world, only humans are exalted. In the eyes of Heaven and Earth, which are our father and mother, humans, beasts, birds, and insects are surely all the same. Among these none are as clever as humans, but is this cleverness a good thing? If one or two people are clever it may be good, but if everyone is clever, they put their cleverness to use against each other, and more and more wicked things occur. In a world that, in keeping with nature, has few things, people's thoughts may wander, but they act based only on what is right before their eyes, so there is little cleverness. There may be minor incidents, but none becomes serious. It is the same as dogs from one village resisting the intrusion of a pack of dogs from another village, or fighting among themselves over food or mates; the anger is only temporary and does not become something deeply entrenched.

In China they do not allow the people to know of things.<sup>108</sup> Believing that only those above should know things and act, they keep everything obscure. For example, they give Yao and Shun the kind of position that Amida and Shaka have in Buddhism,<sup>109</sup> and put forth the succeeding Xia, Yin, and Zhou dynasties as proof of their greatness. However, Yao and Shun, as well as the Xia, Yin, and Zhou, were not really as people say they were, and many bad things must have occurred. This does not make for a good lesson, though, so they hide these things, make the fundamentals of things obscure, and thus mislead people. This way of doing things was transmitted to this country, and in later times people here as well thought to do the same. If one thinks about it, though, it is evident that people will not accept such deceptions. We should make ancient matters and all other things clear, not lying about anything, and explain that there was nothing in particular in the world then.<sup>110</sup> Thereafter, we should set out a modest degree of teachings to tell people that even so, things having become as they are in later times, there should be this and they ought to do that.

Those with a little learning speak of teaching people and managing the affairs of the country. Yet even the teachings of Confucius, which they take as the basis for such an aim, have never been put to effective use in China, so what benefit could there be in bringing them to our country? That people think they can get

<sup>108</sup> This may be a reference to *Analects* 8.9: "The Master said, 'The people may be made to follow a path of action, but they may not be made to understand it'" (Legge 1893, p. 211). Mabuchi is not being entirely consistent, as he had earlier argued for the importance of making the people "stupid."

<sup>109</sup> That is, Confucians hold Yao and Shun to be sources of absolute authority. Shaka (or Shakyamuni) is the historical Buddha, and Amida (or Amitabha) is the primary Buddha worshiped in Pure Land Buddhism.

<sup>110</sup> *ame ga shita ni mono naki koto*: This phrase is not clear, but from the context, Mabuchi appears to be saying that no explicit teachings were established in ancient times.

others to follow such teachings is because they have not awakened to the heart of Heaven and Earth. Even without being taught, dogs and birds each follow this heart in their own way, just as the four seasons unfailingly run their course.

These same people think only that not marrying someone of the same surname is something good, and say that for siblings in this country to have relations is to act like a beast. Seen from the heart of Heaven, though, how are humans different from birds and beasts? All living things are the same. Humans are the ones who establish regulations, so these of course vary depending on the country and place, just as flora and fauna vary. Therefore, regulations that are made in keeping with what is appropriate for a country are the parental teachings of Heaven and Earth. In this country, in ancient times children of the same mother were considered siblings, and children of different mothers not so. In ancient times human feelings (*ninjō* 人情) being straightforward, there were no relations between children of the same mother, but many relations between children of different mothers. The occasional liaison that did occur between children of the same mother was considered a grave sin.<sup>111</sup> When we look into the origins of things, it must have been through relations between siblings that humans came into being. With the advent of the human age, though, the prohibition against marriages between children of the same mother naturally arose. In ancient China, the country where they try to differentiate themselves from beasts by prohibiting marriage between those with the same surname, we can even see cases of people violating their own mothers. When we consider that this just happened to make its way into written records, we have to wonder what kinds of things have remained hidden. It is foolish to believe that just because a rule has been established once, people will necessarily continue to follow it. If the Chinese were really the kind of people who would obey the rule not to marry those with the same surname, how is it that they could kill their ruler? How shortsighted it is to praise the rule against marrying those with the same surname, while the prohibitions against killing one's father and one's ruler are violated.

Whatever becomes of trivial matters in the realm, the imperial line should continue from generation to generation. When the lines of those above continue, so do the lines of those below. The Chinese speak of a reign so peaceful that not even a speck of dust is stirred, but rather than a hundred years of that, it is better to maintain a more-or-less peaceful government for a thousand years.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>111</sup> An example of this described in both the *Nihongi* and the *Kojiki* is the illicit romance between Prince Kinashi no Karu 木梨之軽 and his sister during the reign of Emperor Ingyō 允恭. In the *Kojiki* version, Kinashi no Karu is sent into exile as punishment, and is followed there by his sister, after which they commit suicide together (Philippi 1968, pp. 333–40). The *Nihongi* presents an ambiguous account of the punishment, first stating that it was the sister who was exiled, but following this with a poem clearly meant to have been written by Kinashi no Karu while in exile (sixth month of Ingyō 24; Aston 1896, vol. 1, pp. 324–25). Later, Kinashi no Karu is described as committing suicide after a succession dispute, but it is noted that another account says that he was exiled (Aston 1896, vol. 1, pp. 328–29).

<sup>112</sup> Mabuchi here contrasts the unrealistic and ultimately counterproductive ideals of perfection imposed by Confucianism with the more realistic ethic of “straightforwardness,” which, even if

Compared to the duration of Heaven and Earth, neither a thousand years nor ten thousand years are even an instant, so it is best to be appropriately round with both the good and the bad; sharp-angled reasoning is useless.

It goes without saying that ever since the Way of the Buddha was transmitted to Japan, it has made people extremely wicked. The true heart of Buddhism is surely not like this, but, pulled along by their own desires, people who practice Buddhism use it as a mask to speak endless falsehoods. What is more, they speak only about humans as having sin. All living things are the same, but has there been a Buddha who preached to the birds and beasts?

Most people believe in karmic retribution. It is bothersome to give examples from the past to disprove this, and when people hear these they still remain doubtful, so let me give an example from the present. There is surely no sin that should bring greater retribution than that of murder. In the period preceding our own, though, there was great disorder, and for many years everyone went to battle and killed people.<sup>113</sup> Those who did not kill anyone at all then are now commoners. Those who killed a few are the hatamoto and samurai of today.<sup>114</sup> Those who killed a few more became daimyo. Those who killed even more became lords of entire provinces.<sup>115</sup> Finally, the one who killed without end became the most exalted person in the land and prospered for generations.<sup>116</sup> Where is the karmic retribution in this? One should realize that killing a human is the same as killing an insect.

What people refer to as karmic retribution or call mysterious affairs are entirely the work of foxes and badgers. Everything in the world has its own particular talent. In almost all cases these are visible, but foxes and badgers are able to trick people. Since there are those today who believe that the descendants of one who, past or present, kills many people will receive karmic retribution, learning of this, badgers amuse themselves by making it appear as if karmic retribution really exists. On the other hand, a person who believes it honorable to have killed many people will feel that should such a situation arise in the future, he himself would kill many people, become prosperous, and make a name for himself. Badgers will not come near him. Because the world is governed peacefully and there are no longer such battles, people have come to think that one should not kill even a fly or a mosquito. Such people are readily bewitched by both priests and badgers.

Remarking on what I had said about martial valor (*mononofu no takeki* もののふの猛) being the most important thing in government, a certain person said,

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it does not eradicate all improper behavior, carries natural regulatory mechanisms that prevent this behavior from causing excessive harm.

<sup>113</sup> A reference to the warfare of sixteenth-century Japan.

<sup>114</sup> In the Tokugawa period, hatamoto were the higher-ranking direct retainers of the shogun, superior to the gokenin. There were approximately five thousand hatamoto.

<sup>115</sup> Large daimyo holding at least an entire province; *kokushu daimyō* 国主大名.

<sup>116</sup> Apparently a reference to Tokugawa Ieyasu 德川家康(1542–1616) and the shogunal line he established.

“What I see today is that those who study the military arts are hoping for war and want to become commander of the army. Those who are skilled in the Way of the warrior (*tsuwamono no michi* つはもの道) think it would be good were the world to become disordered, so that they could go into battle and kill any opponent who faced them, no matter how strong. This kind of attitude endangers the peaceful government of the land.” I disagreed, saying that he did not understand the human heart, and told him to think about this by looking into his own heart. Born into a time of peace, when there is nothing much going on, we become bored with peace. In times like these, people wonder if this is all there is. Reflecting upon the deeds of their ancestors, they become convinced that if only they had the opportunity, they would rise to the top. Seeing no chance for this in their own time, they pass their lives doing what they can. Although they imagine various possibilities, they simply have to follow along with the trend of the times. People who learn the Way of the warrior (*takeki michi* たけき道) are like this; they may hope for the world to become disordered, but this does not make it become so. One or two people may seek to act on their desires, but since it is difficult to get by without going along with the current state of the world, there is nothing they can do, and they end up concealing their plans. People’s hearts are all like this; when those above wield authority with martial valor, people will follow for some time, even if this does not come from the heart.

Is it not good, then, to learn the Way of the warrior (*takeki michi* 猛き道) and pass it down to one’s descendants, for use in an emergency? Although those who learn the Way of the warrior are said to be hard-hearted and wicked, those who truly learn it well are not so. Even if there is one among these who is hard-hearted, how many more must there be who are hard-hearted and wicked without having studied the martial arts? Just because there is occasionally one who is hard-hearted, do not take this to be the rule. What is more, were something to come up, then even those hard-hearted people would be useful in their own way. Can we expect that the world will always continue to be as peaceful as it is today? This is not something we can know, so it is foolish for rulers to value only those who are in keeping with the spirit of the times. It is good that one’s retainers be varied in nature. The only way to govern is to make valor one’s basis, avoid stirring up those brave warriors who are hidden here and there, and strike fear in those powerful people who do come out in the open. Even when everyone is calm on the surface, can we assume that their hearts are also calm? All people have falsehood in their hearts.

Do those who stand a little above others think that those who follow them will do so come what may? For a while they will follow because they have no choice. Even if there is a pact between master and servant, though, people are unlikely to feel truly grateful if they receive only cursory rewards. Most people forget kindnesses, but are deeply aware of mistreatment. Therefore it is foolish to believe that just because you have been good to someone once, they will never forget it. Understand this well. Those of some status, with over a hundred retainers, should all learn the arts of war. Although you may learn generally that you

should stand at the ready in this case and mount such-and-such defense in that case, effective maneuvering is impossible without brave warriors. Even if one has such people, it is no use if they do not follow from their hearts. If one were to send one's mounted forces into battle and nobody followed, one would naturally wonder what to do. If one tries to force them to follow, who will docilely do so? They have parents, wives, and children, so they would rather escape and hide than die. As for those who have no choice but to follow, will they do so with all their heart? Therefore one should not make a display of one's status. Instead, one should cultivate good relations with the high and the low, treating them kindly and thinking of them as one's children. Then, apart from the effect of one's being lord in name, one's followers will have deep feelings of gratitude. In that situation, it is the custom of our country that people will not begrudge their own lives and will no longer think even of their families.

People generally do not feel deeply about things when there is no promise of gain. Because of this, the Way of the Buddha draws people in by telling them that if they recite such and such, they will become wealthy and will be saved in this life and the next. People are therefore all devoted to Buddhism. The Way of the warrior (*bu no michi* 武の道) likewise does not achieve any effect simply by teaching that this is wicked and that is bad. However reasonable people may find this, unless there is some promise of return, such teachings will not penetrate to the depths of their hearts and draw them in. If retainers truly feel gratitude, then even if they number no more than a hundred or five hundred in all, their lord's words and thoughts will resonate throughout the realm. When he sends his mounted forces into battle, people will gather to follow him even without being ordered to do so. With this, great victories can be achieved. Therefore there is nothing that rivals learning the martial Way. Put in these terms, it may seem that it is only for use in time of war, but if one is on good terms with one's retainers as I have been describing, one's house will prosper effortlessly. Being straightforward, the true Way of the warrior (*bu no michi*) is not lackadaisical or selfish, so it allows one to govern both house and realm effortlessly.

A certain person said, "The value of poetry as put forth in the preface to the *Kokinshū* makes sense, but does poetry have any other significance?" I replied that the preface is correct in describing poetry's efficacy as lying in the individual points of the capacity to move Heaven and Earth, make spirits and gods feel pathos (*aware* あはれ), moderate the relations between men and women, and soothe the hearts of fierce warriors.<sup>117</sup> What stands above and encompasses all of these is the gentle heart. The human heart is selfish, so people quarrel with others and judge things on the basis of reasoning (*kotowari*), but when they possess the spirit of poetry, they go beyond reasoning and employ gentleness, so the world is governed well and people are at peace. This can be compared to the four

<sup>117</sup> The kana preface to the *Kokinshū* states, "It is poetry that effortlessly moves Heaven and Earth, makes unseen spirits and gods feel pathos, moderates the relations between men and women, and soothes the hearts of fierce warriors."

seasons. The essence of summer is to be hot, but people could not stand it were it suddenly to become relentlessly hot from the first day of summer. Things are bearable because they are gradual and because even in the midst of heat and cold there is some relief morning or evening, night or midday. Who could live in this world were it not for such moderating gentleness?

All this applies to Chinese poetry (*morokoshi no uta* もろこしの歌) as well, but in later times people came to compose without any basis in feeling. They sought to surprise people, or worried that if they composed in a certain way people would be critical, or if they composed in another way people would not be pleased. Therefore what they produced does not express the genuine heart (*makoto no kokoro* 誠の心) and is not genuine poetry. However, since the gentle heart has been used in poetry from ancient times, even though the poetry of today may be bad, the ancient gentle heart continues to permeate the world. Since all people know this heart, they naturally are able to go beyond reasoning. Were people to rely simply on reasoning, those who are powerful and of high rank could ignore the multitude and do anything. Instead of thinking that high rank is such a thing, should not those of high rank, too, realize that it will not work to treat even the lowly in this way? Should not one temper one's manner with gentleness and even the brave and manly not push down the weak? Here, too, one should make gentleness the base. In composing poetry, one may not start out with the intention to be gentle; nevertheless, since poetry is something that expresses beautifully what is felt in the heart, what one says will naturally be more gentle and graceful than usual.

A certain person said, "What you say makes sense, but that is something of the distant past. In the present day, customs have greatly changed, and people's hearts have become wicked, so how could we ever return to the past? Instead, we should follow along with the times and make the best of things. Things of the past are useless now." Everyone thinks this to be true, I responded, yet in discussing both military principles and government, one must start by putting the base in order. The multitudes are governed according to the heart of the ruler, but it is rare for a good ruler to be born from among the many people. When government follows the heart of a bad ruler, is it likely to be good? All I have been saying is on the premise of the occasional good ruler whom one must wait for. Should a ruler emerge who valued the past and wished for the world to be straightforward, then all the world would become straightforward within the space of ten or twenty years. It shows a poor grasp of these matters to think that things cannot improve. The world moves according to the heart of the one person who is at the top. Even in a battle where people's lives are in peril, it depends on the heart of the general; if it is straightforward, they will not begrudge their own lives. In all things, one should look back to the straightforwardness of the original heart.

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